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THE DEMOCRATIZING POWER OF THE INTERNET IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

by

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This thesis argues that the Internet is likely to be a strong, positive facilitating factor for the transition to and consolidation of democracy for states in Southeast Asia. U.S. policy makers intent on promoting democracy in Southeast Asia should consider the Internet's potential as a tool for promoting democratization.

A review of the existing democratization literature, coupled with quantitative analysis of the societal impact of computer networking technologies, suggests that the level of Internet connectivity is a powerful indicator of democratization. Compared to education and income, Internet connectivity provides greater statistical explanatory power in predicting democracy.

The Internet experience in Indonesia and Malaysia, two Southeast Asian states ruled by non-democratic authoritarian regimes, supports this argument. Internet expansion in both states has co-varied with increasing levels of political liberalization and this may enhance the prospects for democratic transition. Both states have abandoned strict controls on press freedom and free speech on the Internet.

A democracy assistance program designed to increase the level of Internet connectivity in Southeast Asia may serve the purpose of promoting democracy while also advancing U.S. economic interests. Such a program may be viewed with less suspicion and as more politically neutral than traditional forms of democracy assistance.

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THE DEMOCRATIZING POTENTIAL OF THE INTERNET IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ABSTRACT

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A review of the existing democratization literature, coupled with quantitative analysis of the societal impact of computer networking technologies, suggests that the level of Internet connectivity is a powerful indicator of democratization. Compared to education and income, Internet connectivity provides greater statistical explanatory power in predicting democracy.

The Internet experience in Indonesia and Malaysia, two Southeast Asian states ruled by non-democratic authoritarian regimes, supports this argument. Internet expansion in both states has co-varied with increasing levels of political liberalization and this may enhance the prospects for democratic transition. Both states have abandoned strict controls on press freedom and free speech on the Internet.

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I. INTRODUCTION

> *The Internet we make so much of today – the global Internet which has helped scholars so much, where free speech is flourishing as never before in history—the Internet was a Cold War military project. It was designed for purposes of military communication in a United States devastated by a Soviet nuclear strike. Originally, the Internet was a post-apocalypse command grid.*
>
> *And look at it now. No one really planned it this way. Its users made the Internet that way, because they had the courage to use the network to support their own values, to bend the technology to their own purposes. To serve their own liberty. Their own convenience, their own amusement, even their own idle pleasure. When I look at the Internet—that paragon of cyberspace today—I see something astounding and delightful. It's as if some grim fallout shelter had burst open and a full-scale Mardi Gras parade had come out.*[1]

Bruce Sterling, the 1997 Hugo Award winning science fiction writer, made these incisive remarks before the Convocation of Technology and Education of the National Academy of Sciences in May 1993. In that year the Internet consisted of approximately one million host computers in 50 countries around the world. Only four years later there are now over 20 million hosts located in 171 countries. Some estimates place the number of current Internet users between 50 and 60 million people.[2] To say that the Internet has exceeded the growth estimates of its designers is to make the understatement of the decade.

That the Internet has "arrived" is without question. That it has expanded to reach nearly every country on Earth is, in the timeline of cyberspace, ancient history. That its growth and popularity has gained a momentum all its own is obvious. That it is revolutionizing the manner in which the world communicates is quickly becoming undeniable.

But the Internet phenomenon runs much deeper. It has become a subculture unto itself, spawning its own unique vernacular and creating what even the mainstream press has begun to refer to as "virtual communities." It has become much more than a forum for

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1 Bruce Sterling "Literary Freeware – Not for Commercial Use" [on-line] (speech delivered at the Convocation on Technology and Education, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, 10 May 1993); available from http://infosoc.uni-koeln.de/etext/text/gibson.93.txt; Internet; accessed 14 Oct. 1997.

2 Robert H. Zakon, *Hobbes Internet Timeline v3.1* [on-line] (n. d); available http://info.isoc.org/guest/zakon/Internet/History/HIT.html; accessed 27 Oct. 1997; Joshua Cooper Ramo, "The Networked Society," *Time International, 3* Feb. 1997; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 17 Oct. 1997.

university bound technophiles or computer game playing adolescents. The Internet is expanding well beyond its own electronic borders and is starting to impact significantly upon the "real" world. These effects on society, on culture and on politics only now are beginning to be realized.[3]

We are told that we are witnessing the dawn of the "Information Age," a term that somehow implies humanity has crossed a new threshold, entered a new epoch. Ignited in the last century with the advent of the telegraph and the telephone, and enhanced in this century with radios, satellites and undersea cables, momentum has grown. The melding of computers with telecommunications in the 1980s and 1990s has brought about this "Information Age."

The Internet is the hallmark of this revolution. Unlike point to point communication technologies such as the telephone, and broadcast technologies such as radio and television, the Internet has overcome time as a limiting barrier to effective communication. It is inherently asynchronous, allowing people to communicate with others independent of time and place. And, more importantly, unlike the technological innovations that have preceded it, the Internet has empowered ordinary people with tools to both gather and disseminate massive amounts of information nearly instantaneously. No longer is the power of information exchange and retrieval concentrated in hands of a privileged elite. But what will be the impact of this new technology? How does one separate what is likely and what is actually occurring from the hype?

Much has been written about the possibilities of Internet and like technologies. The lion's share of such writing, however, is a strange mix of science fiction, technological idealism and wishful thinking, long on conjecture yet short on facts and detailed analysis. This essay takes a birds-eye view of one of the Internet's boldest claims to fame: that the Internet is a strong, positive force in the promotion of democracy around the world.

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[3] For a detailed examination of the revolutionary nature of the Internet and its impact on society see Steven Johnson, *Interface Culture: How New Technology Transforms the Way We Create and Communicate* (San Francisco: Harper Edge, 1997), 64-65.

A. THE INTERNET AS A DRIVING SOCIAL FORCE

Throughout history, social revolutions on a grand scale have often resulted from technological developments in the field of communication. Historians recognize the invention of written language as a key event in human ascendance. The development and refinement of sailing ships brought previously isolated civilizations into direct contact for the first time, creating tremendous upheaval. And the invention of the printing press is credited with emergence of the Enlightenment, scientific discovery, and nationalism, a force of unmatched power in directing the social and political thoughts and actions of people in today's world.

Some argue that the Internet is one such innovation; a technology so unique, so remarkable, that it will yield tremendous changes in the world's social and political landscape. Michael and Rhonda Hauben argue in *Netizens: The Expanding Commonwealth of Learning: Printing and the Net*, that the Internet is as much a revolution in Man's ability to communicate as was the printing press.[4] Comparing the development and early use of the Internet today with the development and early use of the printing press as described by Elizabeth Eisenstein in *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, the Haubens point out the striking and comprehensive parallels between the two innovations. The printing press, for instance, reversed the "corruption of the copyists" wherein mistakes and distortions in texts created by the scribes were compounded and multiplied over time. The press allowed mistakes to be corrected in subsequent editions of a manuscript through feedback to the publisher, a practice encouraged in the age of the press but non-existent in the age of scribes. A deeply ingrained "feedback" loop is even more evident in much of the communication that occurs on the Net such as in USENET news groups or on the World Wide Web. Other changes brought on by the printing press that in many ways parallel changes brought on by the Internet include: enabling long distance collaboration and cooperation, changing the way text is presented and cross-referenced, encouraging cross-cultural exchange, and creating museums without walls. Many of the unique facets of the printing press that are attributed to the large scale social changes

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[4] Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: The Expanding Commonwealth of Learning: Printing and the Net (Chapter 9)* [book on-line] ([Los Alamitos, CA]: IEEE Computer Society Press, 1997); available ftp://ftp.cs.columbia.edu/pub/hauben/html/netbook/ch.9_printing.html; Internet; accessed 12 July 1997.

that followed have been enhanced and expanded by the Internet in a quantum sense, unlike any other communication innovation that has occurred in the intervening centuries.[5]

One of the primary benefits advanced by Internet supporters has been the Internet's role in enabling and enhancing the prospects for democracy around the world. Detractors have claimed the opposite, arguing that the Internet is in many ways an obstruction to democracy, or at the very least, a force that will likely cause more social and political upheaval than it allays.

While the question of the Internet's democratizing potential has been openly discussed within the Internet community, scholarly discourse in the field of political science, until only very recently, has largely ignored the effects of the Information Age on political transformation. It has, however, centered largely on discussions of "democracy." This is understandable given the global explosion of democratization that has occurred in the last decade. The debate has ranged from questions regarding the definition and features of democracy to questions of the value of democracy and its ostensible worldwide suitability as a system of government. Even when definitions are agreed upon, and it is conceded that democracy is a desirable system of social and political organization, questions abound regarding the factors that would likely facilitate a transition to and consolidation of democracy.

Given the extensive literature examining the emergence of democracy and factors that contribute to democratization, it is surprising that few scholarly analyses of the Internet's democratizing potential have been conducted. Clearly a comprehensive inquiry into the potential impact of the Internet on the process of democratization is warranted, if for no other reason than to evaluate the "grand" claims of its supporters. Such an examination should necessarily include not only the theoretical aspects of the Internet's effects on democratization, but should also examine the growing body of empirical data of the Internet in action in today's world. The developing states of Southeast Asia provide fertile ground for the conduct of such an inquiry.

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[5] Ibid.

B. WHY SOUTHEAST ASIA?

No region of the world is better suited to such an analysis than the countries of Southeast Asia. Consisting of a few nascent democracies and a collection of states exhibiting a mix of hard and soft-line authoritarian regimes, the states of Southeast Asia have experienced phenomenal levels of economic growth over the last two decades. With booming economies and an extraordinary explosion in telecommunications technologies, it is no wonder that the Internet has caused some degree of controversy and promise in Southeast Asia.

Positioned on the economic development scale between the traditional "developing world" (exemplified today by the majority of states in Sub-Saharan Africa) and the newly industrialized states of East Asia (Korea and Taiwan for example), the robust developing states of Southeast Asia are unique from any other region in the world. Choosing a self-labeled "Asian model" of development, the leaders of several Southeast Asian countries have achieved a large degree of success, building strong growing economies, significantly raising the median standard of living, and creating an industrial base poised to take full advantage of future technological developments.

Portions of Western culture have been assimilated into Southeast Asia wholesale, some even to the point of co-option. The Western hunger for high-tech gadgets is a primary example. Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand have all embraced Western technology to the extent that a significant market share of the West's consumption of computers, telecommunication equipment and consumer electronics is now manufactured in Southeast Asia. Vietnam and the Philippines are actively seeking to join this growing club of high-tech producers as well. U.S. and Japanese corporations are flocking to Southeast Asia in large numbers, seeking to establish manufacturing and production facilities under favorable labor, tax and legal conditions.

With this flow of Western technology firms and their manufacturing facilities comes the Internet: the self-perceived masterpiece of U.S. technological dominance. And, consequently, Southeast Asians are discovering that the Internet is more or less an all-or-nothing proposition. It is difficult—if not possible—to absorb only those portions of the Internet that are deemed desirable. With the good comes the bad. Hence the Internet's rapid arrival in Southeast Asia is embroiled in controversy.

Democracy is controversial in Southeast Asia as well. Viewed against the backdrop of the long and varied political history of the world, democracy has a short and relatively untested history. Only in the Western world has any long-term experiment in democratic government been attempted. In the last century, democracy has occasionally surfaced in Asia, generally lasting only for a few years. Democracy, as a widely adopted form of government, has not existed in Asia to any significant extent, hence the suspicion and doubt that it engenders in the region, especially among the ruling elite, is somewhat understandable.

Some in Southeast Asia view democracy as simply another form of Western imperialism; a cultural imperialism designed to destroy "Asian" society and to force Western values upon populations that have no desire to adopt them. In this same context, some argue that the Internet is at the forefront of this modern day colonization, forcing Western values and culture upon people that have only recently rid themselves of their European (and American) colonizers.[6]

C. CAN THE INTERNET PROMOTE DEMOCRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA?

This thesis addresses each of the complex issues surrounding the Internet's spread through Southeast Asia in order to investigate the Internet's potential as a democratizing force. By examining the role of the Internet in Southeast Asia within the context of the wider scholarly debate on democratization, conclusions regarding the Internet's democratizing potential can be determined.

In the final analysis it is clear that the Internet will likely be a strong, positive facilitating factor for the transition to and consolidation of democracy in Southeast Asia. U.S. policy makers intent on promoting democracy in Southeast Asia, therefore, should seriously consider the Internet's potential as a tool for promoting democratization.

The organization of this paper is as follows: Chapter II explores the potential for the Internet to assist in the transition to and consolidation of democracy. Theoretical

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[6] Alan Henderson, "Asia and the Internet: Not Too Modern, Please," *Economist*, 16 Mar. 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

arguments—on both sides of the issue—are analyzed and available empirical evidence weighed. Potential dangers to democracy posed by the Internet are considered.

Chapters III and IV focus on the Internet as it exists in Southeast Asia today, with special emphasis on the social, political and cultural changes that it is bringing to the region. Chapter III takes a broad view, examining the Internet across the region. Chapter IV zeroes in on two countries, Malaysia and Indonesia, where the democratic potential of the Internet appears most promising.

Chapter V presents a look at future prospects for the Internet in Southeast Asia, and addresses the question of policy implications of this research for the United States in pursuing its stated foreign policy goal of promoting democracy abroad.

D. DEFINITION, DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND FEATURES OF THE INTERNET

The "Internet" means different things to different people. To computer engineers and systems professionals it often means the sum total of the infrastructure of the thousands of computer networks that comprise it. To others it means the World Wide Web, a rich graphic intensive behemoth consisting of millions of "websites," each as accessible as any other, each distinct, and many consisting of hundreds of individual "webpages." To still others it means a worldwide instantaneous mail system, a collection of thousands of individual news feeds, an entirely new "virtual world," or some combination of all of the above. Because of its size, scope and versatility, the Internet almost defies a single definition. And as with most complex systems, the entire system consists of much more than the sum total of all of its parts.

What then is the Internet? Gaining at least a basic understanding of this question is an important pre-requisite to any discussion of the impact of the Internet on society. In an elementary sense, the Internet is a giant network of interconnected computers that transfer information using switched packets of data. The system incorporates a simple standard common addressing system referred to as the Domain Name System (DNS) and a

communications protocol known as Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).[7]

The Internet is not controlled or operated by a central computer; its processing power and organizational structure are distributed across thousands of connected computer networks around the world. The Internet is specifically designed to be a decentralized network.

Although professional organizations such as the Internet Society (ISOC) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) issue specific technical standards, users make all other decisions regarding the Internet. These decisions are not made through any organized decision making process; they are made through the day-to-day actions of Internet users. The Internet—in all of its complexity—is basically anarchical in nature. This total lack of centralized control is a structural feature of the Internet and has as much to do with the Internet's origins than with its evolution over time.

As previously noted by Bruce Sterling, the Internet has its roots in an advanced military command and control system devised by the U.S. Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in the late 1960's. ARPANET was specifically designed to ensure the survivability of U.S. strategic nuclear forces in the event of a calamitous strategic nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union. Computer networks before ARPANET were of the master-slave variety with a single computer acting as controller for the entire network. Packet switching was a breakthrough, establishing true peer-to-peer networking, where no single computer controlled the network. This new design was well suited for military command and control structures since loss of single or even multiple network nodes during wartime would not adversely affect the remainder of the system.[8]

In 1983 ARPANET was split into MILNET and ARPANET, and in 1990 ARPANET was retired. The National Science Foundation Network (NSFNET) assumed the network

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[7] Vinton Cerf, "How the Internet Came to Be," in *The Online User's Encyclopedia*, by Bernard Aboba [on-line] ([Reading, MA]:Addison-Wesley, 1993); available http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/2260/cerfl.html; Internet; accessed 8 Oct. 1997.

[8] Henry Edward Hardy, "The History of the Net" [on-line] (master's thesis, School of Communications, Grand Valley State University, 1993); available http://www.ocean.ic.net/ftp/doc/nethist.html; Internet; accessed 8 Oct. 1997.

backbone role of ARPANET. NSFNET combined with the National Research and Educational Network (NREN) to form what is known today as the Internet.[9] Thousands of other networks have been added since that time, exceeding more than 100,000 interconnected networks by 1996.[10]

The Internet has evolved into a diverse collection of independent (yet frequently interconnected) modes of communication. The most prominent and widely used forms of Internet communication include:

World Wide Web (WWW) – A graphics and text based environment that increasingly incorporates multimedia (sound, video, etc.) as well as real-time interactivity. The Web consists of millions of websites devoted to delivering an amazing breadth and depth of information on nearly every topic. Resources available on the Web include those related to entertainment, news, academic research, commerce, and politics to mention only a few.

E-mail – A text based communication method used for point-to-point, person-to-person communication as well as multi-recipient broadcasting. An E-mail message sent by one person is stored on the recipient's mail server computer until the recipient retrieves the message. In addition to text, files, and graphics, a variety of multimedia can be transferred using e-mail.

USENET News – A text based broadcast service organized into subject specific newsgroups. Subscribers to a particular newsgroup receive all messages sent to the group.

LISTSERV Mailing Lists – A hybrid communication method that delivers USENET type subject specific newsgroups to recipients via E-mail.

Dozens of other communication methods proliferate on the Internet including Internet telephone, video teleconferencing, text based chat, graphics rich chat environments, multi-user virtual worlds (MUDs, MOOs, etc.), file transfer (FTP), Gopher, Archie, etc.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Zakon.

Classification of Internet communication modes is difficult. Traditional classification schemes fail to capture the essence of the Net. Is the WWW broadcast or point-to-point technology? What about e-mail? The answer to these questions is neither or both, depending upon perspective. The overlapping, versatile nature of the Internet communication demands that it not be considered in the same context as print, broadcast, or point-to-point telephone based media. The Internet is revolutionary in its methods as well as its size and scope.

II. INTERNET AS A DEMOCRATIZING FORCE

If the volume of scholarly literature on a particular issue is any measure of the relative importance of that issue to society then the study of democratization in the 1990s must rank as one of the most critical issues of our time.[11] Doh Chull Shin observes in a review of this literature:

> *In terms of the sheer amount of attention from the scholarly community and professional associations, the study of democracy and democratization has become a veritable growth industry as witnessed by the recent sharp rise in the number of professional conferences and publications on the subject.*[12]

The field of political science and international relations has concentrated significant energy on the study of how, why, and under what circumstances states and societies embark on the transition to democracy. An inquiry into the potential democratizing effects of the Internet must necessarily begin with an analysis of this large body of literature. Democratization theorists have identified a number of key factors that are critically important to the transition to and consolidation of democracy. Identifying each of these factors will allow a detailed analysis of how the Internet impacts upon them.

A. WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

"Democracy" may have the dubious honor of being the most misused word in political discourse. Politicians from across the political spectrum have championed it. Particularly in today's world where democracy, as a form of government, is all the rage, the

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[11] This study of transitions to democracy is, however, just a subset of the larger field of democratization studies. An equal, if not greater, amount of research has examined questions regarding the value of democracy. A fierce intellectual debate continues to rage regarding the merits of the "democratic peace," the idea that democracy is a better form of government precisely because democracies do not go to war with each other. This debate has serious implications for policy makers around the world, and the United States in particular. It is, however, beyond the scope of this essay. Questions regarding the validity of the "democratic peace" are wide-ranging and hotly contested. This paper will not attempt to discern the relative advantages or disadvantages of democracy as a form of government; it will instead concentrate on the question of the Internet's potential role in transitioning to and consolidating democracy. For a well-balanced presentation of this debate see Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996).

[12] Doh Chull Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics* 47 (Oct. 1994): 138.

leader of any state would be remiss not to appropriate the word "democracy" to describe themselves.

Consequently, until quite recently, scholars had generally avoided using this term without proper qualification.[13] The literature of the third wave, however, has reversed this trend. A general understanding of what is understood by "democracy" has emerged. This is not to say that disagreement has ended over the scope of what is meant by "democracy," but simply that the scholarly community has developed a general consensus on what are considered the basic underlying principles of "democracy." Schmitter and Karl offer the following definition:

> *Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.*[14]

Key to this definition is the absence of any reference to specific institutions or structures that are commonly associated with democracy. The institutions of democracy vary greatly from state to state, and in this realm, there is significant disagreement and controversy over which institutions best employ the concepts of democracy. Despite the specific form of democracy (presidential, parliamentary, etc.) certain procedural concepts are common to all democracies. Widely accepted by the broad community of social scientists, Robert Dahl lists the following seven "procedural minimal" conditions that must exist for government to meet the modern definition of democracy:

1) *Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.*
2) *Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.*
3) *Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.*
4) *Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government....*
5) *Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined....*

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[13] Phillippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is...and Is Not," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, 2d ed., ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 49.

[14] Ibid., 50.

6) *Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law.*

7) *...Citizens also have the right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.*[15]

Schmitter and Karl argue that two additional conditions are necessary to distinguish democracy from the those forms of government that may retain all of the appearances and trappings of democracy but that fail to embody the basic concepts. These concepts are "accountability of rulers to the people" and "self-governance." The first caveat is added to exclude those governments in which actual political control is vested in the hands of the military or some other unelected person or persons:

8) *Popularly elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding (albeit informal) opposition from unelected officials.*[16]

The second caveat excludes non-sovereign governments who are ultimately subject to the rule of another state:

9) *The polity must be self-governing; it must be able to act independently of constraints imposed by some other overarching political system.*[17]

The limiting nature of this "procedural minimal" definition of democracy may appear overly restrictive. Such restrictions are relevant, however, due to the increasingly frequent emergence of states that have fully adopted the basic form of democracy without achieving the underlying principles. Thomas Carothers reports that:

> *In its annual surveys of democracy and human rights, Freedom House has found in recent years that a growing percentage of countries that are formally democratic are only partly free—in other words, there are more and more countries that have succeeded in achieving the basic form but not the actual substance of democracy.*[18]

Examples of this trend are evident in Southeast Asia. Singapore, for example, is a self-labeled democracy that fails to achieve a number of the underlying concepts. Singaporean law severely restricts political expression that is critical of the government. Joseph Tamney argues that:

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[15] Robert Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 11, quoted in Ibid., 55.

[16] Ibid., 55.

[17] Ibid., 55.

Singapore is not a democracy, despite the holding of elections and the use of democratic terms such as Parliament and prime minister. Democracy Asian-style in Singapore is authoritarianism.[19]

Democracy is indeed a complex concept that does not allow a quick and easy definition. Defining democracy requires an understanding of the basic concept it embodies, and an understanding of the minimum procedures that must be in place to guarantee this concept is met in practice. Democracy, at least as referenced in scholarly discourse, is not a relativistic term that can be employed to fit desired circumstances—it refers to a very specific set of principles that provide the basis for government.

B. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF DEMOCRATIZATION – LESSONS OF THE THIRD WAVE

Samuel P. Huntington has identified three distinct periods in world history that have been characterized by waves of democratic transition. The most recent of these periods, referred to as the "third wave" started in the mid 1970s with the fall of dictatorships in Portugal, Spain and Greece, and exploded in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the democratization of much of the former Soviet Union. This third wave continues to expand democracy throughout the world today.

A significant result of recent research on this third wave has been the disaggregation of the process of democratization into component parts. Four stages of democratization have been identified: (1) decay of authoritarian rule, (2) transition, (3) consolidation, and (4) the maturing of democratic political order. This same research has also concluded that democratization is not necessarily a linear process proceeding from one stage to the next. Democracies often fail before transition is even completed, or dissipate instead of consolidate.[20]

Clearly identifying democratization as a process consisting of a sequence of stages has clarified much of the current debate, and has, in many ways, transformed the approach of

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[18] Thomas Carothers, "Democracy," *Foreign Policy* (summer 1997): 11.

[19] Joseph B Tamney, *The Struggle Over Singapore's Soul: Western Modernization and Asian Culture* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 81.

[20] Shin, 141.

research efforts. Emphasis has clearly shifted from that of a search for prerequisites of democracy to examinations of the dynamics of democratization as a process.[21]

Recent study of democratization, then, has concentrated on the factors that have both brought about and contributed to the successes (or failures) of this third wave. In a detailed review of current research, Shin identifies a number of general propositions regarding democratization:

1. *There are few preconditions for the emergence of democracy.*
2. *No single factor is sufficient or necessary to the emergence of democracy.*
3. *The emergence of democracy in a country is the result of a combination of causes.*
4. *The causes responsible for the emergence of democracy are not the same as those promoting its consolidation.*
5. *The combination of causes promoting democratic transition and consolidation varies from country to country.*
6. *The combination of causes generally responsible for one wave of democratization differs from those responsible for other waves.*[22]

These propositions have established the context under which follow-on research has been conducted. The critical result of much of this research has been the realization that democratization is a complex process that is often subject to gross over-simplification. Factors leading to democratization have varied over time and from country to country. No simple, single answer exists for why any country has proceeded down the path of democratization.[23]

Specific facilitating factors, however, have been noted. Factors have been conveniently grouped into two primary categories: domestic and international. In the domestic sphere, Shin identifies three key factors that have facilitated the current wave of democratization.

The first factor involves a regime's perceived legitimacy. Shin argues that, "the most prominent domestic factor is the steady decline in the legitimacy of authoritarian rule."[24] Some

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[21] Ibid., 138-141.

[22] Ibid., 151.

[23] Ibid., 138-141.

[24] Ibid., 151-152.

regimes have lost legitimacy because they have failed to overcome the domestic problems—primarily economic—that enabled them to initially seize power. Others have lost legitimacy because of a fundamental shift in values that has occurred precisely due to their economic success. This shift of values from that of materialism to post-materialism has been characterized by increasing popular demands for political freedom and participation. Unwilling to give in to such demands for fear of relinquishing power these regimes have been unable to justify their continued existence.

The second factor consists of the depth of civil society within the state. Shin states that, "the strengthening of civil society is the second domestic factor that has helped to remove authoritarians from office."[25] Civil society, a concept that has gained notoriety in the United States due to its supposed decline, is the realm of public association and discourse outside that of government and commerce. Voluntary and special interest organizations and associations characterize civil society. Economic development, industrialization and urbanization are forces said to have contributed positively to the rise of civil society so evident in the third wave. Shin reports that:

> *Many of these organizations and associations, which Tocqueville considered the building blocks of democracy, became alternative sources of information and communications. They directly challenged authoritarian regimes by pursuing interests that conflicted with those of the regime and eroded the capacity of authoritarian rulers to dominate and control their societies.*[26]

The third and final domestic factor identified by Shin as having enhanced the prospects for democratization is an increasing level of education and income of the masses.

> *At the individual level, increasing education and expanding income have exposed the masses to the virtues of democratic civilization. Those changes have also provided ordinary citizens with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual incentives to pursue democratic reforms. In short, the proliferation of autonomous associations and steady increases in the cognitive mobilization of the masses have seriously undermined the foundations of authoritarian rule.*[27]

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[25] Ibid., 152.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

The extensive body of democratization literature also points to factors originating outside of the state, within the international political environment. Shin identifies two external factors that have been key in bringing about the third wave:

Pressure from other countries and assistance provided by international organizations have contributed to the democratization process. Countries such as the United States have applied economic and diplomatic pressure to coerce authoritarian regimes to reform. Shin argues that this pressure has weakened the regimes' "moral basis by encouraging people to realize that democratization is the necessary ticket for membership in the club of advanced nations."[28] International organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, have been instrumental in the democratization process as well, providing "material and moral support for the expansion of autonomous organizations and the news media."[29]

The second international factor responsible for much of the third wave has been what Samuel P. Huntington has coined as "snowballing". Shin explains:

> *Yet another international force has contributed a great deal to the collapse of authoritarian rule (the first phase of democratization). This is international "snowballing," or the effects of diffusion. As vividly demonstrated in Eastern Europe and Latin America, earlier transitions to democracy have served as models for later transitions in other countries within the same region.*[30]

Although it is not apparent by the foregoing taxonomy, these factors, domestic and international, are closely related and have often been intertwined. In some countries domestic factors have taken precedence, in others international factors have had the largest effect. The particular mix of each of these factors (along with many other factors) has varied for each state that has democratized. Shin argues that "despite such differences, it is this confluence of domestic and international factors that distinguishes the current wave from the previous ones."[31]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 153.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

The democratization literature has identified one additional overriding principle, a principle that has been evident in the first two waves of democratization as well as in the third. Strategic elites, in both the political and social spheres of society, have had a much greater effect upon the transition to democracy than have the masses. Shin states that:

> *As in the previous waves, strategic elites have been a key factor in bringing about a majority of democratic transitions in the current wave. Especially in the transitions since the early 1980s elites have played a far more significant role than has the masses. For this reason, the literature does not consider the commitment of the mass public to democracy an absolute requirement for democratic transition. Indeed, it suggests that democracy can be created even when a majority of the citizenry does not demand it.*[32]

This observation may at first appear antithetical to the basic concept of democracy. It is, however, quite consistent, and with a great deal of empirical evidence. Mass participation is important to democracy but only during the consolidation phase of the democratization process. Shin explains:

> *It is only in the consolidation phase of new democracies that the mass public plays a key role. As in the past waves, it appears that democracy can still be created without the demand of masses, yet cannot be consolidated without their commitment. It seems then that the role of the mass public in the process of democratization has changed little since the first wave of democratization in the nineteenth century.*[33]

These then are the central lessons to be learned from research that has been conducted on the third wave.

C. INTERNET MEETS THE THIRD WAVE – THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Whatever the facilitating factors for democratization may have been for individual countries of the third wave, technology has been a significant—if not crucial—underlying factor. This point is voiced, albeit infrequently, in democratization literature. In identifying new forces that are "powerfully propelling the current wave," Shin identifies international communication linkages as a force propelling the idea of democracy, while at the same time undermining authoritarian regimes.[34]

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[32] Ibid., 153-154.

[33] Ibid., 154.

[34] Ibid., 169.

Such arguments aside, technology is infrequently discussed as a major facilitating factor in the democratization process. If technology is specifically identified, it is usually only in an incidental manner, and rarely as central to any theoretical arguments. This reluctance to recognize the social and political transformative power of technology could be due to a lack of specific research on the issue, or a belief among theorists that technology plays such a minor or non-existent role that it does not even warrant discussion.

Another more likely cause, advanced by Walter Wriston, former chairman and CEO of CitiCorp/Citibank, and Chairman of the Economic Policy Advisory Board in the Reagan administration, is that diplomatic historians tend to "minimize or even ignore the impact of scientific discoveries on the course of history, preferring instead to follow the great man theory or look for the historical tides that carry the world along."[35] The near universal characterization of the recent rise of democratization as the "third wave" lends credence to Wriston's argument.

The argument that technology and the Internet are important social forces, however, is by no means free from detractors. Richard E. Sclove, director of the Loka Institute's Technology and Democracy Project, outspoken Internet opponent, and author of *Democracy and Technology*, laments what he sees as the "the persistent media hype about the Internet and cyberspace. Even the recent spate of critiques that have begun to come out are publicized by the mainstream media in hyped, self-serving ways. The hype is driven by the hope of profits and strategic positioning."[36] Clifford Stoll, author of *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway*, agrees. Stoll contends throughout his book that the "Internet phenomenon" is nothing more than self-serving hype designed to advance the cause of computer and software developers at the expense of other more important aspects of society.[37]

In addition to general criticism, claims of the Internet's potential to foster democratization have also come under heavy fire. Does the Internet actually contribute to

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[35] Walter B. Wriston, "Bits, Bytes, and Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (Sep./Oct. 1997): 172-182.

[36] Richard E. Sclove, interview by Stephen L. Talbot, in "A Quick Guide to the Politics of Cyberspace," *Netfuture*, [magazine on-line] 6 Feb. 1996; available http://www.ora.com/people/staff/stevet/netfuture/1996/Feb0696_6.html#4; Internet; accessed 11 July 1997.

[37] Clifford Stoll, *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), passim.

democratization or is this theory being advanced solely to further enrich American high-technology stockholders? The following is a detailed two-fold examination of this question. First this thesis considers the Internet as a potential facilitator of democratization in light of the aforementioned conclusions drawn from the literature of the third wave, both in terms of facilitating the transition to and the consolidation of democracy. Then available quantitative data on the Internet's impact on society, and on democracy in particular, is examined. In the final analysis it will become quite clear that the "Internet phenomenon" is much more than hype; the Internet is indeed a strong, positive force for the facilitation of democratization around the world.

1. Role of Internet in the Transition to Democracy

The Internet impacts upon authoritarian societies in striking ways, creating conditions that may facilitate transitions to democracy. It weakens the power structure of authoritarian regimes by eroding the legitimacy of authoritarian rule. The Internet strengthens the second building block toward democratic transition by expanding the resources available to civil society. Newly created elites, particularly those in a position to successfully push for a democratic transition, are those most empowered by the Internet. Finally, the Internet exposes society to the global culture surrounding it, creating further incentives for democratization.

a) Declining Legitimacy of Authoritarian Rule

The literature of the third wave refers frequently to the idea of political legitimacy. This term, depending upon context, suggests a number of different concepts. In its classical sense, legitimacy implies the right or mandate for a leader to rule. The legitimacy of kings and emperors was often based upon heredity; people accepted the authority of their leader not because of coercion (although that was also often used) but because of a widely held belief that the king was their rightful ruler. The legitimacy of a king was undermined when questions arose regarding progression of royal family bloodline, not based upon his performance.

Non-heredity-based ruling systems, such as many modern day authoritarian regimes, however, have no such widely held belief on which to base their justification for ruling the population. In many cases the legitimacy of such regimes is based almost entirely

upon performance: economic, social or political. To the degree that they have a say, people grant the authoritarian leadership of such regimes the mandate to rule only so long as they believe that the regime is succeeding as a form of government. This is not to say that when a majority of people believes that a regime is not performing well that it will be overthrown; on the contrary, some regimes are able to maintain power through coercion even while widespread disenchantment exists regarding their performance. Measures of legitimacy are difficult. Popular disenchantment with a regime is one indication, but it certainly does not suggest an imminent revolution, coup or political transformation. The level of political unrest may be another indication, but this too has its limits as authoritarian regimes frequently use coercion specifically to quell political dissent.

In the context of this discussion of the potential democratizing power of the Internet, legitimacy is broadly defined to include popular dissent and disenchantment with authoritarian rule—both in terms of the existing regime and in terms of the ideological conception of authoritarianism as a legitimate form of government.

Authoritarian regimes have lost much of the domestic legitimacy they once commanded. Two common paths to this loss of legitimacy have emerged. Primarily in Eastern Europe and much of Latin America, authoritarian regimes have lost legitimacy because they have failed to "solve economic and other problems that had allowed them to take power in the first place."[38] In Asia the reasons have generally been quite different. Regimes in South Korea and Taiwan lost legitimacy because of their economic success. Rising income and standards of living resulted in the expansion of a middle class that has called for greater political freedom and participation. Legitimacy dissipated as these regimes refused to give in to such demands.

These two paths are markedly different. In the former, it is unlikely that the Internet or global communications technologies in general could have played a major role in the regime's loss of legitimacy, except possibly that economic disaster was intensified by a distinct lack of modern computer and communications technologies. This is primarily true because the existence of Internet or other global communication network connectivity in such

[38] Shin, 152.

states was generally quite low. Without a state having previously experienced economic success sufficient to have incorporated a global communications infrastructure on a large scale, it is difficult to foresee a future instance where the Internet's role in such a path to democratization would be anything but tangential.

But, in the case of the latter, the Internet or other global communications technologies played a crucial role in many of these type of transitions, and, more importantly, the potential for the Internet positively impacting on future transitions of this variety is high. Economic success is said to have caused a portion of the population to demand increased political freedom and participation that authoritarian regimes have refused to grant. Digging deeper here, one must wonder, what brought about these demands in first place? Why did people who, in most cases, had lived for centuries in a culture that demanded submission to authority suddenly wakeup, as it were, to the recognition they deserved a degree of political power and begin questioning the legitimacy of their own leaders. The refrigerators, microwave ovens, and Levi's they purchased with their new found wealth provide no compelling reason to believe that they have brought on this quantum change.

However, the radios, televisions, telephones, computers and satellite dishes they purchased do. Demands for a greater stake in political and economic decisions occur because these nouveau rich observe these values, through a wide variety of communication media, in the more developed—and democratic—world. They admire the ideals of political freedom and then, when level of income and wealth allows, they imitate what they observe in the developing world. Economic success by itself does not lead to demands for political participation; sufficient wealth to easily satisfy basic needs *coupled with a global system of communication* that openly promotes the worth of self-governance is what has produced this marked change in values.

When discussing the impact of this global flow of information, Huntington has argued that:

> *Increasingly exposed to the democratic alternative and finding it attractive, masses become less willing to condone the continuation of authoritarian rule.*[39]

[39] Ibid., 169.

Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State, argues that these Internet linkages have been a major factor in the democratic transitions that have occurred in the third wave:

> *The current, so-called third wave of democratization started in the mid-1970s with the demise of right-wing dictatorships in Portugal, Spain, and Greece, and in the 1980s it gathered momentum and spread. Technology was a major factor. Even the most heavily fortified borders became increasingly permeable to the onslaughts first of radio, then of television, and eventually of fax machines and E-mail.*[40]

If the limited communication technologies of the past were instrumental in bringing new ideas and new aspirations to those living under authoritarian rule, then there can be little doubt that the greatly expanded capabilities of the Internet in delivering such information will only serve to accelerate and strengthen the process.

Internet critics disagree. They contend that the Internet will serve only to entrench the power base of authoritarian regimes. The incredible information retrieval and storage technologies of the Internet, coupled with newly developed surveillance technologies will enable authoritarian rulers to further persecute dissidents and minority groups. Sclove argues that those in power, including the super-rich, will likely "retain vastly greater capabilities to adopt powerful technology more quickly, to amass and analyze information, and, in many cases, to act on it."[41]

George Orwell would have revelled in this thought. The facts of the third wave, however, have proven the technophobic premise of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* false. Francis Fukuyama, in a recent review of the most influential books of the past 75 years said of Orwell's classic:

> *And yet, as Peter Huber has pointed out in his parody Orwell's Revenge (1994), the 'telescreen' as described by Orwell is, technically speaking, nothing other than the networked personal computer. The wiring together of a significant part of the planet proved to be a success that could not be controlled by centralized authoritarian states. Indeed, it turned out that the spread of inexpensive electronic technology tended to disperse rather than concentrate power...*[42]

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[40] Strobe Talbott, "Democracy and the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* 75 (Nov./Dec. 1996): 50.

[41] Sclove.

[42] Francis Fukuyama, "Significant Books of the Last 75 Years: Political and Legal," review of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by George Orwell, *Foreign Affairs* 76 (Sep./Oct. 1997): 214.

And Wriston, speaking of the "third revolution" or the information revolution, argues that:

> *Information technology has demolished time and distance. Instead of validating Orwell's vision of Big Brother watching the citizen, the third revolution enables the citizen to watch Big Brother. And so the virus of freedom, for which there is no antidote, is spread by electronic networks to the four corners of the Earth.*[43]

Michael Bauwens echoes this view, arguing that Orwell was wrong because he failed to foresee the bi-directional nature of the new media.[44] Certainly governments can attempt to apply technology to aid in repression and coercion, but the people can use this technology for their own (often opposing) purposes as well. Orwell's vision only becomes believable if government has a monopoly on technology. This point is critical because it is the bi-directional versatility of the Internet (as opposed to other recent communication innovations) that makes it so powerful and so revolutionary. The Internet removes *control of publication* from the wealthy, the well connected and the ruling elite, and places it firmly in the hands of anyone with access to a computer and modem.

b) Strengthening Civil Society

Democratization theorists are nearly unanimous in identifying "civil society" as an important element of the transition to democracy. But what is this concept of civil society? Democratization theorist Larry Diamond defines civil society as:

> *The realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from 'society' in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. Civil society is an intermediary entity, standing between the private sphere and the state.*[45]

Alan Wolfe concurs, adding that civil society is "those forms of communal and associational life which are organized neither by the self-interest of the market nor by the

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[43] Wriston, 172.

[44] Michel Bauwens, "On Internet Democracy vs. Information Poverty," *Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine,* [magazine on-line] 1 Apr. 1996; available http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1996/apr/baudemo.html; Internet; accessed 16 Sep. 1997.

[45] Larry Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy,* 2d ed., ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 228.

coercive potential of the state."[46] The characteristics that civil society strives to develop, Wolfe argues, are trust, cooperation, and altruism.

These definitions are broad and include social organizations and activities that are clearly outside the sphere of civil society. Diamond adds four additional qualifications to further limit the scope of civil society:

> *1. Civil society is concerned with public rather than private ends.*
>
> *2. Civil society relates to the state in some way but does not aim to win formal power or office in the state. Rather, civil society organizations seek from the state concessions, benefits, policy changes, relief, redress, or accountability...*
>
> *3. Civil society encompasses pluralism and diversity...*
>
> *4. [Civil society assumes] partialness, signifying that no group in civil society seeks to represent the whole of a person's or a community's interests. Rather, different groups represent different interests.*[47]

Civil society is often seen as an end in itself. There is, however, nothing magical about it. Civil society works to facilitate democracy because it creates a public space, a place absent the coercive power of the state and absent the anarchy of the market, where people can associate with one another and communicate their needs, wants and desires in a deliberative manner. This deliberative communication helps form the bonds of trust, altruism and cooperation for which civil society is so revered. Then, through a multitude of mechanisms, civil society both attempts to keep the state in check and to perpetuate the democratic process.

The Internet enhances and builds upon civil society in two independent ways. First the Internet creates a new and revolutionary—although markedly different—form of public space where people congregate and participate in deliberative discourse much the same as in traditional civil society. Second and more importantly, the Internet enhances traditional civil society by empowering existing civil society organizations and associations, and by contributing to the creation of new ones.

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[46] Alan Wolfe, "Is Civil Society Obsolete? Revisiting Predictions of the Decline of Civil Society in Whose Keeper?" *The Brookings Review* [journal on-line] 15 (fall 1997): 9-12; available http://www.brook.edu/PUB/REVIEW/FALL97/WOLFE.HTM; Internet; accessed 2 Oct. 1997.

[47] Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," 229-230.

(1) Cybercommunity

The claim that the Internet creates "virtual communities" that mirror public space and civil discourse in the physical world is one of the most widely assailed propositions of those advanced by Internet proponents. This proposition has been rejected at face value by many because it seems unlikely given the popularly promoted media images of "cyberculture," and appears to be directly contradicted by the widely accepted theory that a serious decline in "social capital" has occurred in the United States over the last decade. This decline, it is argued, is due, in large part, to the emergence of new technologies such as television (and the Internet) that consume a significant portion of the average citizen's time, time that would presumably be spent engaging in civil society or other social activities.[48]

In a comprehensive essay on the Internet's impact on social networks, Scott London argues:

> *Virtual communities are, more often than not, pseudocommunities. They lack many of the essential features of real communities, such as face-to-face conversation, the unplanned encounter—the chance meetings between people that promote a sense of neighborliness and familiarity—and, perhaps most important, the confrontation with people whose lifestyles and values differ from yours. In this sense, virtual communities tend to be utopian—they are communities of interest, education, tastes, beliefs, and skills.*[49]

London argues that virtual or "non-place" communities "tend to exacerbate, rather than challenge the atomization and fragmentation of modern society," and that they "give members a sense of belonging without any of the obligations of old-fashioned communities."[50] Further, London and others argue that discourse on the Internet is markedly non-deliberative in nature and therefore contributes little if any to the democracy-enhancing potential normally associated with civil society. Critics further contend that a sense of like-mindedness exists on the Internet, where in the words of Stephen Doheny-Farina, "much of the Net is a Byzantine amalgamation of fragmented, isolating, solipsistic enclaves of interest

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[48] Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* (Jan. 1995): 70.

[49] Scott London, "Civic Networks: Building Community on the Net" [on-line] (paper prepared for the Kettering Foundation, Mar. 1997), available http://www.west.net/~insight/london/networks.htm; Internet; accessed 12 July 1997.

[50] London.

based on a collectivity of assent."[51] In cyberworlds, people choose their associations based entirely upon personal interests. In physical communities, however, we are forced to associate in one way or another with those within our same physical location, whether we share the same interests with them or not. These viewpoints are widely shared in both the Internet and the international relations/political science communities.[52]

Such critiques of Internet "cyber-communities" are critically flawed because evidence of civil society on the Internet is not clearly distinguished from commonplace conversation. It would be ludicrous to claim that all organizations, associations and interpersonal communications that occur in society reflect civil society; or to simply select at random an organization, association or discussion in search of civil society. Civil society, as discussed in democratization literature and as credited with contributing positively to both the transition to and consolidation of democracy, is clearly bounded. No claim is made that casual conversations of everyday life constitute civil society. Yet when analyzing the Internet for the possible existence of civil society, no such distinction is made. A spontaneous grouping of teenagers conversing at a suburban shopping mall would not be mistaken for civil society. The same grouping of teenagers chatting about the latest music video in one of the much maligned America Online chatrooms on the Internet, however, is presented as evidence of the shallow, non-deliberative nature of a medium that offers no serious contribution to civil society.

Even a cursory examination of the long-term, committed and faithful community of individuals that read and submit to the "apakabar" e-mail mailing list (the largest mailing list reporting news on Indonesia), for instance, or any one of thousands of serious USENET or LISTSERV newsgroups for that matter, produces ample evidence of civil society: groups of individuals engaged in voluntary, deliberative discourse relating to public issues.

The contention that associations on the Internet are formed on the basis of a "collectivity of assent" that simply promote like-minded discussions and therefore exclude dissent, prevent positive interaction with competing interests and viewpoints, and limit

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[51] Stephen Doheny-Farina, *The Wired Neighborhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1996), 55.

[52] For the Internet perspective see Bruce Bimber, "The Internet and Political Transformation" [on-line] 23 Dec. 1996; available http://www.sscf.ucsb.edu/~survey1/poltran2.htm; Internet; accessed 12 July 1997; and Sclove; for the political science perspective, see: Claude Moisy, "Myths of the Global Information Village," *Foreign Policy* (summer 1997): 78-87.

exposure to diversity is flawed in a similar manner. Associations in the physical world, as in cyberspace, are often specifically structured around a single viewpoint, at the exclusion of outsiders who may disagree. Atomization of society along narrowly aligned demographics, issues, or views is not unique to cyberspace; nor is there any evidence to suggest that cyber communities are in any way more atomized than society at large.

On the contrary, more so than traditional media, the Internet exposes individuals to viewpoints that they may not otherwise have an opportunity to consider. Putnam may be correct that technology has diminished civil society, but the Internet—because of its unique characteristics—has achieved the opposite. Johnson observes that:

> *Most of the major innovations of the past hundred years have made it progressively easier to avoid contact—and particularly conversation—with people who aren't colleagues, or family, or friends. The automobile created the isolated cloisters of the suburbs; the telephone and the television kept us firmly implanted in our domestic spaces; even the public life at the cinema unfolds now under a vow of silence.*[53]

The bi-directional, universal and anarchic nature of the Internet, however, differentiates it from previous innovations. Johnson continues:

> *Instead of being a medium for shut-ins and introverts, the digital computer turns out to be the first major technology of the twentieth century that brings strangers closer together, rather than pushing them farther apart.*[54]

And as a medium for the honest and impartial reflection and consideration of opposing viewpoints, the asynchronous—time independent—feature of a large majority of Internet communications (e-mail, LISTSERV, USENET, and WWW) may actually provide a more conducive environment for deliberative thinking and discourse than the "decision on the spot" atmosphere often present in real world personal interactions. Hauben and Hauben argue that:

> *The Net brings the isolated individual into contact with people, opinions, and views from the rest of the world. Exposure to many possible opinions gives the reader a chance to actually think something over before making a decision as to a personal opinion.*[55]

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[53] Johnson, 64-65.

[54] Ibid., 65.

[55] Hauben and Hauben.

Social science research on the societal implications of the Internet is sparse, and although this issue is addressed in more detail later, it is important to note here that the most comprehensive study to date, a 1995 RAND study entitled *Universal Access to E-mail: Feasibilty and Societal Implications*, concluded that:

> *Prior studies...show little reason to be concerned that citizens will abandon the needs of their local (physical) communities in favor of virtual communities in cyberspace. Rather, communications are typically addressed to a community of concerned individuals, and either for reasons of subject matter or prior acquaintance, these concerns are often (although not necessarily) geographically bounded. Thus, network access can be expected to enhance rather than detract from community involvement.*[56]

The case for cybercommunities enhancing civil society by creating new and unique "public spaces" for deliberative discourse that positively contributes to community involvement is well established. That cyberspace does not seem to fit in the traditional mold of "civil society" does not discount the fact that it can and indeed does produce many of the same positive results.

(2) Physical Resources

The second and likely more effective manner in which the Internet contributes to the rise of civil society is the positive impact that it has upon the real world associations that comprise traditional civil society. The mechanisms for this contribution are numerous and wide-ranging, hence only a few are addressed here, with the remainder discussed in subsequent sections. Unlike the issue of cybercommunities, however, there is much less disagreement that the Internet exerts a strong, positive force in enabling and enhancing the activities of a wide variety of organizations and associations at the community, state and global levels. Free and open bi-directional communication is enabled for these groups both internally between members within the organization, and externally with other individuals or organizations.

New public spaces are also emerging. "Cybercafes," for instance, where inexpensive Internet access is made available to the general public are increasingly emerging in the developing countries of Southeast Asia and elsewhere. These gathering places

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[56] Robert H. Anderson et al., *Universal Access to E-mail: Feasibility and Societal Implications* [book on-line] (Santa Monica: RAND, 1995); available http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR650; Internet; accessed 12 July 1997.

are quickly assuming an important role as centers for public discussion of key social and political issues.

Even critics of the Internet's democratizing potential admit that it is affecting the nature of discourse in the real world. London concedes that:

> *On-line venues such as "chat rooms," mailing lists, and newsgroups can go a long way toward disseminating new information and ideas, naming and framing collective issues, and promoting broad-based discussion.*[57]

And Jessica Matthews, who criticizes worldwide Internet expansion as a dangerous globalizing force (an issue analyzed in depth later in this thesis), argues that through international networks the Internet is empowering local interest groups. Discussing the recent rise in the size, scope and power of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Matthews identifies computer networking as the key variable in NGOs new found success:

> *Technology is fundamental to NGOs' new clout. The nonprofit Association for Progressive Communications provides 50,000 NGOs in 133 countries access to tens of millions of Internet users for the price of a local call. The dramatically lowered costs of international communications have altered NGOs' goals and changed international outcomes.*[58]

The effect of this new clout has been to educate, strengthen and empower local interest groups. Matthews argues that a "circle of influence" often develops between local NGOs and larger, more experienced global NGOs, the international media, and the host governments of the global NGOs:

> *Cross-border NGO networks offer citizens [sic] groups unprecedented channels of influence. Women's and human rights groups in many developing countries have linked up with more experienced, better funded, and more powerful groups in Europe and the United States. The latter work the global media and lobby their own governments to pressure leaders in developing countries, creating a circle of influence that is accelerating change in many parts of the world.*[59]

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[57] London.

[58] Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (Jan./Feb. 1997): 54.

[59] Ibid., 54.

The Internet, then, is not the exclusive realm of computer game playing adolescents, sheltered academics and techno-geek computerphiles as it is often imagined and portrayed. The very organizations and associations that democratization theorists point to as critical in bringing about an authoritarian regime's transition to democracy can be empowered by the Internet. Important contributions to the rise and empowerment of civil society in both developed and developing states can be realized through access to the global Internet.

c) Empowerment of Elites

Internet critics point out that the Internet is not free; computer equipment, communications links, and on-line access time all have a cost. And, unlike television that simply requires the user turn it on, and newspapers which require a basic level of literacy, the Internet, they argue, requires literacy and a degree of education in the use of computers. These two factors, critics contend, place the Internet out of reach for the common person, creating an "information elite" that will serve only to further stratify society along socio-economic, ethnic and geographic fault lines.

In the context of the Internet's impact on established democracies, this argument may reveal limitations of the Internet's effect on the consolidation of democracy, an issue that is considered later in this paper. In terms of its impact upon potential authoritarian transitions to democracy, however, this argument misses a key lesson of the third wave; mass participation is not required for the transition to democracy. The third wave has clearly demonstrated that mass movements calling for democratic transition are isolated exceptions.

Social, economic and political elites have been key instigators in the bulk of democratic transitions in the last two decades. In each transition the specific makeup of the groups that have formed pacts to bring about democratic change have differed. In the transitions that have occurred in Asia, various groups of elites have engineered the transition to democracy. In these states, decades of strong economic growth brought large increases in real income and standards of living. This economic success contributed to the rise of a middle class that became dissatisfied with authoritarian rule. Better educated than their predecessors and armed with previously unheard of levels of disposable income, these newly

created elites increasingly demanded political freedom and participation. Rejecting the arbitrary nature of authoritarian rule, these elites embraced democratic reforms.

To the extent that the Internet creates an "information elite," it probably can empower the middle and upper classes in society, groups from which the very elites that are in the best position to bring about a democratic transition are members. Arming them with information, creating peer networks for communication and organization, and establishing a safe enclave—free from government control—for the growth and development of democratic movements, the Internet contributes to the spread of such movements. Hauben and Hauben argue that:

> *Many groups which do not have a strong established form of communications in society have found the Net to be a powerful tool. It has proved fertile ground for groups which are not firmly established in their local culture.*[60]

The creation of an "information elite" early in the democratization process can contribute positively to undermining authoritarian rule and enabling a democratic transition. The fact that the introduction of the Internet in developing nations does not occur equitably across the socio-economic spectrum does not diminish the potential for democratization; on the contrary, it may enhance it.

d) Globalization of Democracy

The remaining key factors identified in democratization literature as having facilitated the third wave operate at a level external to the state. Pressure from external actors, both states and NGOs, has contributed to the emergence of democracy. "Snowballing" or the "democratic demonstration effect" has been a factor as well.

Economic and diplomatic pressure applied by external states is necessarily a political decision, and therefore receives criticism for being more a feature of great power hegemony than a program to expand democracy.[61] That controversy aside, the Internet contributes to this process inasmuch as dissident and other organizations in authoritarian

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[60] Hauben and Hauben.

[61] For a well-balanced description of this controversy see Larry Diamond, *Promoting Democracy in the 1990s: Actors and Instruments, Issues and Imperatives* (Washington: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1995); and Paula R. Newberg and Thomas Carothers, "Aiding—and Defining—Democracy," *World Policy Journal* (spring 1996): 97.

regimes use it as a tool to communicate government abuses to the outside world. Policy makers in states considering the application of pressure are better able to make informed decisions when direct, on-the-scene evidence, such as these organizations provide, is made available.

The significant impact that global NGOs can exert in promoting democracy and the key role that the Internet plays in the effectiveness of these organizations already has been established. States may choose to expand these efforts by encouraging and supporting such NGOs. Through this support, the Internet, then, serves as an indirect policy-making tool of states desiring to promote democracy abroad.

The Internet's role in enhancing these specific external facilitating factors is limited to the extent that they are employed by states and/or NGOs; the Net's impact in this respect is not an independent, self-propelling force as was evident in the analysis of the Internet's relationship to domestic facilitating factors. The Internet is, however, at the forefront of a larger more general self-propelled driving force that is facilitating democratization through both domestic and external means. This force is globalization.

Globalization is an imprecise and often misused term that has come to mean everything from utopian dreams of peace through world government and the destruction of cultural differences, to the relatively recent marked rise in international trade and the multilateral agreements that have enabled that trend. The study of globalization consists of an entire body of literature. This literature is generally distinct from democratization literature, yet the two frequently overlap. This paper does not attempt to discuss globalization in detail but instead briefly examines the general features of the trend including the role of the Internet and implications for democratization, and future prospects for the expansion of globalization.

The explosion of international communication technologies and improvements in the cost and speed of global transportation have brought the world closer together. A global community is taking shape with many of the characteristics normally associated with traditional communities: culture, norms and institutions. The Internet serves as the primary medium through which this global community is forming. Wriston observes that:

The convergence of computers and telecommunications has made us into a global community, ready or not. For the first time in history, rich and poor, north and south, east and west, city and countryside are linked in a global electronic network of shared images in real time. Ideas move across borders as if they did not exist. Indeed, time zones are becoming more important than borders.[62]

Not surprisingly, this global community is adopting culture and norms consistent with what has arguably become the world's most influential political and social force of the last decade: democracy. Wriston continues:

A global village will have global customs. Denying people human rights or democratic freedoms no longer means denying them an abstraction they have never experienced, but violating the established customs of the village. It hardly matters that only a minority of the world's people enjoy such freedoms or the prosperity that goes with them; these are now the benchmarks. More and more people around the globe are demanding more say in their own destiny. Once people are convinced that this is possible, an enormous burden of proof falls on those who would deny them.[63]

The result is an admittedly amorphous, yet surprisingly powerful and independent force that applies internal and external pressure to regimes that fail to adopt its central precepts. Wriston speaks of both the present and the future when he contends that:

The global conversation puts pressure on sovereign governments that over time will influence political processes all over the world. The information revolution is thus profoundly threatening to the power structures of the world, and with good reason.[64]

The prospect this trend offers for the worldwide expansion of democracy is obvious. The global culture views authoritarian regimes as undesirable relics of an age that has long since passed. Expansion of this view globally may contribute to undermining the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes, while at the same time giving strength to the forces propelling the advance of democracy.

Authoritarianism is said to offer the best available means to counter this rising tide of globalization. By simply employing existing structures of control and redoubling efforts to close their society to outside influences, dictatorial regimes may believe that they can effectively exclude unwanted outside influences.[65] As shall be vividly demonstrated in a

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[62] Wriston, 175.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Has Democracy a Future?" *Foreign Affairs* 76 (Sep./Oct. 1997): 2-12.

number of cases in Southeast Asia today, such a plan provides little prospect for success. Authoritarians in today's world are faced with a fundamental dilemma: close their societies and forego the possibility of economic expansion, modernization and growth, or welcome foreign investment, economic liberalization and global communications, and face the challenges that globalization presents. Increasingly authoritarian regimes are finding themselves forced to pursue this latter path just to maintain, at least in the short run, whatever small degree of legitimacy they command. This dilemma and its far-reaching effects are fully explored in the context of the vibrant economies of Southeast Asia in the next two chapters.

Will this trend toward globalization go too far and negatively influence the democracy that it aims to erect? This question forms the crux of the globalization debate. Sclove, for instance, argues that the globalization the Internet brings will create a "cybernetic Wal-Mart effect" where online commerce will rob local shops and professional service providers of their business base, causing them to be overrun and acquired by large corporations located across the globe, or if they resist, to ultimately fold. This effect, Sclove contends:

> *...means increased local dependence on distant corporations and on global economic forces...neither of which can be influenced very much from the local level. That means less local control over local circumstances, which fundamentally diminishes democracy (that is, people's ability to influence basic circumstances of their lives).*[66]

Douglas Barnes and Anne Wells Branscomb each make separate cases for the imminent arrival of a new and dangerous form of global extraterritoriality.[67] Because global networking clearly blurs the line imposed by national borders and makes it difficult to determine in which states' jurisdiction cyber-events (such as commerce) actually occur, states, according to this argument, will increasingly resort to international mechanisms and/or unilateral action to retrieve and prosecute individuals from other countries that it perceives have violated its (local) laws. Barnes concludes that, "As the net expands, it seems to increase

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[66] Sclove.

[67] Douglas Barnes, "The Coming Jurisdictional Swamp of Global Internetworking" [on-line] 16 Nov. 1994; available http://www.eff.org/Net_culture/Global_village/anon_juris.article; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997; and Anne Wells Branscomb, "Jurisdictional Quandaries for Global Networks," in *Global Networks: Computers and International Communication,* ed. Linda M. Harasim (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994).

the opportunities for conflict faster than the opportunities for togetherness and world understanding."[68]

On a grander scale, a number of authors have posited that the expansion of global computer networking will make the nation-state, the basic unit of democratic governance, an ineffective, if not endangered, phenomenon.[69] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. argues that:

> *The Computer Revolution offers wondrous new possibilities for creative destruction. One goal of capitalist destruction is the nation-state, the traditional site of democracy...The computer turns the untrammeled market into a global juggernaut crashing across frontiers, enfeebling national power of taxation and regulation, undercutting national management of interest rates and exchange rates, widening disparities of wealth both within and between nations, dragging down labor standards, degrading the environment, denying nations the shaping of their own economic destiny, accountable to no one, creating world economy without a world polity. Cyberspace is beyond national control. No authorities exist to provide international control. Where is democracy now?*[70]

Each of these contentions, warning of the imminent disaster that globalization offers, are one-sided analyses that fail to recognize that governments are active participants in the Information Revolution as well as individuals, corporations and other non-state actors. Each of these visions portends to foresee the final stages of the globalization transformation, yet each fails to account for the solution to each of these problems that is already occurring and is growing in strength as globalization advances. This solution is transgovernmentalism. Recognizing the powerful role played by the Information Revolution, Anne-Marie Slaughter explains that neither the unaccountable world government envisioned by liberal internationalists, nor the anarchic chaos envisioned by modern medievalists (such as those quoted above) will occur:

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[68] Barnes.

[69] Schlesinger, 2-12; and Mathews, 50-60.

[70] Schlesinger, 8.

> *The engine of this transformation [a shift away from the state—up, down, and sideways—to supra-state, sub-state, and, above all, nonstate actors] is the information technology revolution, a radically expanded communications capacity that empowers individuals and groups while diminishing traditional authority. The result is not world government but global governance. If government denotes the formal exercise of power by established institutions, governance denotes cooperative problem-solving by a changing and often uncertain cast. The result is a world order in which global governance networks link Microsoft, the Roman Catholic Church, and Amnesty International to the European Union, the United Nations, and Catalonia.*[71]

Nation-states are not disintegrating under the heavy weight of globalization, and no sign of world government is visible on the horizon. What is clearly occurring is that a form of "cooperative governance" or transgovernmentalism is emerging. Slaughter observes that:

> *A new world order is emerging, with less fanfare but more substance than either the liberal internationalist or the new medievalist visions. The state is not disappearing, it is disaggregating into its separate, functionally distinct parts. These parts—courts, regulatory agencies, executives, and even legislatures—are networking with their counterparts abroad, creating a dense web of relations that constitutes a new, transgovernmental order.*[72]

Transgovernmentalism maintains and strengthens the nation-state by nationalizing regulations and agreements reached through functional networks of global actors. These actors, working in concert and mutual interest with each other, produce "rules concerning issues that each nation already regulates within its border: crime, securities fraud, pollution, tax evasion."[73] Each state then implements the agreed upon regulations by codifying them into the states' body of national law. The result is a collection of regulatory agreements that are self-enforcing. Common interests induce each state to comply, yet compliance is only enforced at the national level. States maintain the sovereignty to enact their own laws—as they see fit—while maintaining a common standard across all states.[74]

Globalization is increasingly resulting in instances of transgovernmental activity across a broad spectrum of issues and institutions. Transgovernmentalism expands and enhances globalization while at the same time strengthening the nation-state as the basic

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[71] Anne-Marie Slaughter, "The Real New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (Sep./Oct. 1997): 184.

[72] Ibid., 184.

[73] Ibid., 191.

[74] Ibid., 192.

unit of governmental organization. For established democracies this retains the sovereignty upon which they are based while simultaneously overcoming the problems associated with the open, borderless and often anarchic nature of global communications networks.

Transgovernmentalism holds great promise to contribute independently to democratization efforts as well. Transgovernmental networks and agreements need not be established solely between democratic governments. Slaughter proposes that:

> *Transgovernmental ties can strengthen institutions in ways that help them [regulatory agencies and judiciaries in nondemocratic states] resist political domination, corruption, and incompetence and build democratic institutions in their countries, step by step.... Expanding transgovernmental outreach to include institutions from nondemocratic states would help expand the circle of democracies one institution at a time.*[75]

The "horrors" of globalization, then, may be a mere mirage. Globalization, as a social and political force, is gaining increasing momentum as Internet and other international communication mediums continue to expand. Far from producing either global anarchy or a world government accountable to no one, the trend toward an emerging global culture may very well strengthen the nation-state and facilitate further democratization.

2. Role of Internet in the Consolidation of Democracy

As a number of democratic reversals in the wake of both the first and second waves of democratization have so graphically demonstrated, a transition to democracy is not an end state in itself. For democracy to persist it must be consolidated so that the possibility of a democratic reversal or stagnation becomes remote. Diamond observes that:

> *Consolidation is the process by which democracy becomes so broadly and profoundly legitimate among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down. It involves behavioral and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainty.*[76]

Two factors are key to democratic consolidation: political institutionalization and civil society. Diamond argues that of these two factors, political institutionalization is "the single most important and urgent factor in the consolidation of democracy."[77] Political institutionalization means that key institutions must be strong, robust and able to implement

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[75] Ibid., 194.

[76] Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," 238.

[77] Ibid., 238.

policy, as opposed to weak and impotent institutions that have no power. Diamond argues, that political institutionalization consists of:

> *(1) Strong, well-structured executives, buttressed by experts at least somewhat insulated from the day-to-day pressures of politics...*
>
> *(2) Settled and aggressive (as opposed to volatile and fragmented) party systems—in which one or two broadly based, centrist parties consistently obtain electoral majorities or near majorities...*
>
> *(3) Effective legislatures...composed of strong, coherent parties with centrist tendencies...*
>
> *(4) Autonomous professional and well-staffed judicial systems.*[78]

The role of civil society in the consolidation process is much the same as in the transition process, except that greater inclusion of a wide range of citizens and normalization of democratic politics is required. Diamond argues that this normalization requires:

> *...the expansion of citizen access, development of democratic citizenship and culture, broadening of leadership recruitment and training, and other functions that civil society performs.*[79]

Each of these two factors may be strengthened by the availability of Internet access. Globalization, a trend whose emergence and growth is due almost entirely to worldwide Internet access, may improve and strengthen political institutions through transgovernmentalism. Communicating and interacting with professional counterparts in other countries, and with NGOs devoted to their particular field of interest, leaders as well as lower level staff members of government institutions may be better able to learn and implement institutional procedures that both fit their specific circumstances and have already been tested and proven effective in other democracies. The Internet offers a wealth of knowledge and experience to fledgling institutions that was previously unavailable, or at best available only in the form of democracy assistance programs that were generally of short duration with no long-term commitment.

As previously discussed, civil society is enhanced by Internet access as well. This is especially true in the areas of civil society that contribute to the consolidation process.

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[78] Ibid., 239.

[79] Ibid., 238.

Inclusion of greater numbers and a wider range of citizens into civil society are likely to be achieved by Internet expansion. More so than other medium, the Internet democratizes communication, taking control of mass communication away from the rich, the powerful and the well connected and placing it in the hands of a much larger group of people, specifically those with access to the Net. This is arguably the most important feature of the Information Revolution. Shari Steele contends that:

> *The world that exists in the electrons of computerized communications, frequently referred to as cyberspace, is unique in many ways. Because of its ability to give voice to many people communicating with many others, it has the potential for being the first truly democratic communications tool. For unlike broadcast media, such as magazines and newspapers, cyberspace put the 'printing press' in the hands of the people.*[80]

Critics contend, as already discussed, that the Internet offers no real democratization of communication; the Internet, they argue, will simply further divide society between the information "haves" and "have nots." Schlesinger states that:

> *The COMPUTERIZED world poses problems for democracy. Where the Industrial Revolution created more jobs than it destroyed, the Computer Revolution threatens to destroy more jobs than it creates. It also threatens to erect new and rigid class barriers, especially between the well-educated and the ill-educated.*[81]

Although initially appealing, this argument contains little depth. There is little doubt that social stratification already exists along the lines that Schlesinger is suggesting. The Internet, however, did not bring on these divisions; the barriers between well-educated and lesser-educated individuals have existed for centuries. Across a wide range of societies, entry into the "privileged" schools has often been based upon membership in aristocracy, family wealth and influence, and any number of other insurmountable barriers. Knowledge has been a commodity, carefully hoarded by privileged classes. The Internet, however, promises to overcome many of the historic class barriers that persist even in today's most advanced democratic societies. Offering access to all who desire it, can afford it, and who are willing to search out knowledge, to find it, to learn it, and to make use of it, the Internet will equalize more than it divides. Bauwens argues that:

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[80] Shari Steele, "Taking a Byte Out of the First Amendment: How Free is Speech in Cyberspace?" *Human Rights* [on-line] 23 (spring 1996); available http://www.eff.org/pub/Censorship/human_rights_960420.article; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

[81] Schlesinger, 6.

The Internet is a great equalizer of knowledge, diffusing it throughout the social body. It will remove physical constraints on information processing activities, giving new opportunities to Third World countries (the so-called delocalization effect.).[82]

The argument that information-based class barriers will be erected fails to recognize the dynamics of society and the Internet as well. That in less than five years worldwide Internet access has grown from less than one million individuals to more than 50 million today, and a projected 100 million by the year 2000 provides little support for Schlesinger's contention. It is, in fact, quite reasonable to imagine that as the power brokers of centuries ago, the monks and scribes of pre-enlightenment times, were threatened by the arrival of the printing press, today's elite are threatened by the democratizing potential of the Internet. As previously noted, the comparison is so striking that there is reason to believe that the eventual results will be similar. As the printing press continues to result in increasing levels of literacy around the world, the Internet will achieve technological literacy but on an accelerated scale. Bauwens argues that:

The Internet has a tremendous democratic potential and will undermine hierarchical institutions on a grand scale. If the Western countries succeeded in the much more difficult task of achieving mass literacy, we can seriously believe that we will achieve the task of technological literacy. The only condition required is political will.[83]

A final objection to the Internet's impact upon democracy is frequently voiced. Schlesinger argues that the instant interactivity offered by the Internet could result in an undesirable form of "pure" or "full" democracy. "Pure" democracy is a form of government where citizens "assemble and administer the government in person"[84] as opposed to representative democracy, where citizens express their will through elected representatives. The "electronic town hall" envisioned by presidential candidate Ross Perot is an example of the type of "pure" democracy brought on by the Internet that critics argue may destroy Western style democracy. Notwithstanding the fact that this line of reasoning directly contradicts the contention that that the Internet will create information "haves" and "have nots", this argument merits some mention since it implies that the Internet will go beyond simply consolidating democracy to a point of watering it down beyond recognition.

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[82] Bauwens.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Schlesinger, 6.

Labeling this new form of "pure" electronic democracy "teledemocracy" and comparing and contrasting it with the traditional form of deliberative democracy, Scott London concludes that the two models are simply expressions of two well-established schools of democratic philosophy. Teledemocracy is more consistent with "rational choice" and "the logic of collective action" theorists, while traditional deliberative democracy is more consistent with the thoughts of "collective rationality" or "unitary democracy" theorists.[85] These closely connected yet distinct schools of thought have framed a debate between democratic theorists that has raged for centuries, resulting, for instance, in the inter-woven combination of both schools that exists in the United States today. The national level of government is better characterized by the representative approach, while the local level leans more toward "pure" democracy.

The Internet does not offer the potential to add anything new and dangerous to this existing debate, other than to potentially tip the scale more in one direction than another. Interestingly fears of "pure" democracy have been voiced over the decades at the introduction of many technological and other advances. Television and public opinion polling, for instance, were assailed as having the potential to destroy democracy in much that same manner that the Internet is being accused of today, yet these fears have largely gone unrealized. Although some have argued that these technologies have harmed American democracy, turning it into a race for increasing levels of campaign contributions, the original fear and predictions of the destruction of democracy have not materialized. Bauwens sums up the Internet's potential well, arguing, "On the whole, we have to maintain that the democratic potential of the Internet is far stronger than its undermining effect."[86]

More than simply enabling the spread of democracy, the Internet works to entrench democracy into society. Through strengthening political institutions, expanding civil society, and democratizing communication, the Internet facilitates the consolidation of democracy.

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[85] Scott London, "Teledemocracy vs. Deliberative Democracy: A Comparative Look at Two Models of Public Talk," *Journal of Interpersonal Computing and Technology* [on-line] 3 (Apr. 1995): 33-55; available http://www.west.net/~insight/london/tele.htm; Internet; accessed 12 July 1997.

[86] Bauwens.

3. A Common Thread

When analyzing an issue as complex as democratization, it is fruitful to step back from the fray of individual point and counter-point, put on a wide angle lens and take in the big picture. Maybe a key principle has been missed, an idea or concept that, although not entirely obvious, flows over the entire landscape of discussion. Indeed, in this case, this appears to have occurred.

Shin contends that scholarly study of democratization has shifted in last two decades from a search for "necessary and sufficient conditions" to a search for "facilitating factors" to the democratization process. Democratization, it is argued, it too complex, too varied from state to state for the existence of over-arching, general conclusions regarding its causes. A close examination of the facilitating factors that have been advanced to explain the third wave, however, proves differently. Each of the factors advanced contains a common element at one level or another: *the availability of free, open and democratic communication is the key to each of these factors.*

The world has witnessed the decline and fall of authoritarian rulers for centuries. Over those centuries, more often than not, one authoritarian has simply been replaced by another. Why then have the rules of the game suddenly changed? When dissatisfied with their current ruler, what is now leading people to begin to adopt democratic principles as a defining form of government, instead of simply following the orders of another dictator?

Each of the facilitating factors identified in the literature of the third wave points to a central underlying theme. Rejection of centuries-long acceptance of authoritarian rule occurs when people are exposed to the democratic alternative through free and open forms of global communication.

As the next section will show, quantitative research indicates that increasing levels of education and income are excellent predictors of the likelihood of increased democratization. Shin's analysis of democratization literature presents a similar picture. Is education the key? It is not easy to conceptualize how education by itself undermines the legitimacy of authoritarian rule, and it is also difficult to believe that authoritarian rulers are allowing the "virtues of democratic civilization" to be taught freely in the primary and secondary schools which they control. On the contrary, it seems more likely that public education serves the state as an

indoctrinating force, touting the benefits of strong government and glory of its wondrous leaders.

When Shin speaks of the masses having been exposed to the "virtues of democratic civilization, " and therefore having the "knowledge, skills, and spiritual incentives to pursue democratic reforms," one must wonder where this exposure occurred. In the authoritarian run schools? Tightly controlled local radio and television stations? Possibly the heavily censored press? No, the answer here is quite clear. This exposure to the virtues of democratic civilization comes as a result of access to free, open and global communication.

Perhaps, as suggested in the literature, rising income has caused people to embrace democracy. This argument has a straightforward, logical appeal to it. Yet, as argued above, increased purchasing power alone does not explain this social and political revolution; a new house, better food, improved medical care and the like do not explain democratization. If income is rising and standard of living is improving, why would people risk losing all of this new gained wealth and comfort by rejecting their current form of government and demanding democracy? Income has been a major factor, but only to the extent that it has exposed people to the world around them. Access to global communications is what this new found wealth has purchased and in the process has led to the massive social transformation that has occurred.

What of the external pressure applied to authoritarian regimes? While much of the pressure exerted by other countries consisted of direct diplomatic and economic actions, that applied by global NGOs did not. Much of the pressure exerted on authoritarian regimes came from global democracy and human rights organizations that operate almost exclusively in the realm of global mass media. Increasingly, as has been noted, these organizations are focusing—for very good reasons—on the Internet as a place to both collect and disseminate information. The ability of these groups to apply successfully the pressure of global public opinion, and to persuade policy-makers in the democratic world of the importance of applying diplomatic and economic sanctions or incentives to authoritarian regimes is often directly

related to the size, scope, and accessibility of a free and open source of global communication within the state in question.[87]

But what about "snowballing" or the democratic domino effect? "Snowballing" or diffusion as referred to be Shin makes little sense by itself as a facilitating factor. Taken alone, it is simply a correlational observation without a reasonable explanation of the mechanism through which it operates. One must consider what mechanism might actually lead to such an effect? Do the top leadership of the authoritarian regime observe democracies emerging around them and realize that such change is desirable in their own country, and, therefore, voluntarily abdicate power and initiate moves toward a transition themselves? Or, do strategic elites in the business, academic, religious and political sector observe democracy on the rise around them and, begin to believe that democracy could come about in their country as well? Previous discussions of the importance of these strategic elites in the transition to democracy would suggest the latter mechanism is much more likely than the former. Of course in the controlled society in which they live, it is the existence of free, open and global communication systems that educates these elites, informs them of changes in world around them, bolsters their belief that democracy can succeed in their country, gives them the tools to start down the long road of transition, and provides the forum in which they can organize and mobilize.

The common thread in each of these facilitating factors is the availability of free, open and global communication systems. The Internet provides such a medium, on a scale that is light years ahead of communication mediums that have preceded it, in quality, quantity, speed and versatility. It is of no surprise and possibly little coincidence that the global explosion of the third wave has occurred simultaneously with the global explosion of communication, computer and networking technologies.

D. INTERNET AND DEMOCRACY – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

Researchers have attempted to quantify the relationship between the level of democracy and a wide range of variables. Few statistically significant correlates have emerged from this research. Level of education and income are generally agreed upon as the most powerful correlates. One problem with this type of research is the lack of a universally agreed

[87] Mathews, 54. Mathews argues that the recent rise in the power and influence and global NGOs is due in large part to the availability of global networking technologies.

upon set of indicators to measure democracy. As a concept democracy embodies a wide range of ideas from self-determination to leadership accountability to civil liberties. In practice the issue becomes even more clouded by the wide variety of forms that democracy may assume. No universal formula exists to determine whether a country is democratic; the reality is that democracy is a matter of degree, with some states exhibiting more and others less, indicating that a simple "democratic or not" formula is neither possible nor desired.

This caveat aside, an annual worldwide survey of political and civil liberties conducted by Freedom House has received widespread acceptance in the scholarly community as a valid indicator of the level of democracy in states around the world. *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* scores states in two areas: political rights and civil rights. Freedom House, established in 1914 by Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, is a widely quoted and highly respected nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting democracy around the world. The Survey provides two numeric scores (political rights and civil rights) for each state and based upon those scores, designates each state as "free," "partly free," or "not free." According the Freedom House,

> *The Survey attempts to judge all places by a single standard and to point out the importance of democracy and freedom. At a minimum, a democracy is a political system in which the people choose their authoritative leaders freely from among competing groups and individuals who were not chosen by the government. Putting it broadly, freedom is the chance to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of government and other centers of potential domination.*[88]

Henry S. Rowen's analysis of the "Tide Underneath the 'Third Wave'"[89] exemplifies recent attempts to identify and quantify statistical correlates with democracy using Freedom House data. Rowen confirms prior studies, demonstrating that education (as measured in years of schooling) and income (as measured in per capita GDP) are statistically significant predictors of democracy. Table 2.1 summarizes these findings.[90]

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[88] Roger Kaplan, ed., *Freedom in the World: Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties 1996-1997* [book on-line] (n. p.: Freedom House); available http://www.freedomhouse.org/Political/toc.htm; Internet; accessed 26 Oct. 1997.

[89] Henry S. Rowen, "The Tide Underneath the 'Third Wave,'" in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy,* 2d ed., ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 308-319.

[90] Ibid., 318-319.

Table 2.1
Income and Education versus Freedom (Rowen)

Variable	Adjusted R^2
Education	.378
Income	.296
Education + Income	.402

Note: All values significant at the 0.1% level.

Using multiple regression analysis with data from 1990, Rowen shows that the pattern of variation between both income and education, and democracy is statistically significant below the 0.1 percent level. This means that there is a greater than 99.9 percent certainty that the observed pattern is not due to chance. The magnitude of this variation, expressed by the coefficient of multiple determination (R^2), indicates that roughly one-third of the observed data supports the correlation between education, income and democracy, with education exhibiting a greater degree of predictive power than income, and education and income combined having greater predictive power than either variable alone.[91]

Rowen's analysis is indicative of the bulk of quantitative studies that have attempted to identify predictors of democracy. Other variables have also been examined, including life expectancy, infant mortality, population, geographic region, ethnicity, etc. Within the large body of democratization literature, however, education and income have continued to surface as the strongest predictors of democracy.

Given the significant level of attention that has been devoted to determining statistically and quantifying predictors of democracy, it is surprising that a 1995 RAND Corporation study, *Universal Access to E-mail: Feasibility and Societal Implications*, has gone virtually unnoticed in democratization literature. Although this study is concerned primarily with the societal impact of e-mail technologies within the United States, Chapter 6 of the study, "International Implications for Global Democratization," is an independent statistical analysis devoted exclusively to determining the impact of e-mail and computer networking technologies upon the process of democratization. The implications of this research for the

[91] Ibid., 318-319.

study of democratization are vast and far-reaching; the level of internet connectivity within a state is not only a strong, statistically significant predictor of democracy, but the data conclusively shows that its predictive power is much greater than that of either income, education or these two variables combined.

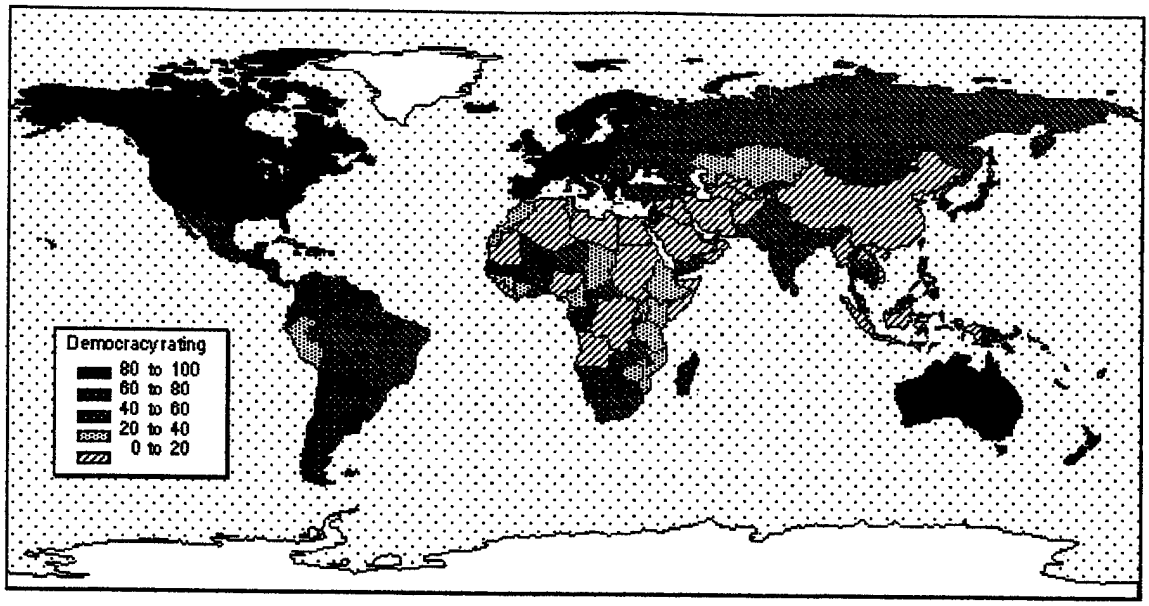
The RAND study is based upon the same general set of widely accepted assumptions and methodology as the Rowen analysis. Freedom House data is used as a quantitative measure of democracy, and multiple regression analysis is performed using a number of variables. A new independent variable "interconnectivity" is introduced. Interconnectivity, a term coined by Larry Landweber as a measure of the spread of global e-mail networks, represents a measure of the number of network nodes per capita. This variable is drawn from data compiled by the Matrix Information Directory Service, and includes the total number of network nodes of the four major computer networks worldwide: Internet, BITNET, UUCP and FidoNet.[92]

A visual representation of the RAND data set is striking. Before conducting any statistical analysis, the strong relationship between interconnectivity and democracy is obvious. Figure 2.1 is a representation of Freedom House democracy ratings plotted on a world projection map.[93] Darker shading indicates higher levels of democracy. Figure 2.2 is the same projection map with interconnectivity scores for each country plotted.[94] Darker shading indicates higher levels of interconnectivity.

[92] Anderson et al.

[93] Ibid.

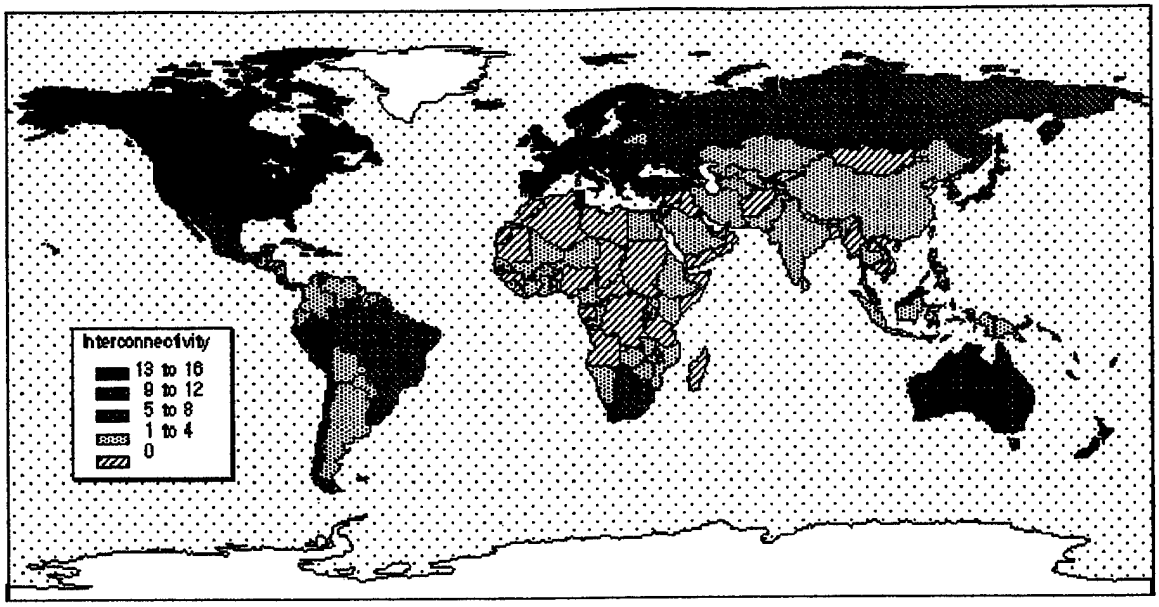
[94] Ibid.



SOURCE: Kaplan (1994).

Figure 2.1 World Democracy

The statistical analysis of this dataset is even more striking. Table 2.2 summarizes the coefficient of determination for a number of variables as reported by RAND using single regression. Most notable in this analysis is that interconnectivity displays the greatest degree of correlation. It is a significantly better predictor of democracy than either years of schooling or per capita GDP, approximately 1.2 times more powerful than education and greater than 1.6 times more powerful than income. Additionally, although these values are the result of univariate regression and not multiple regression, the RAND dataset appears to confirm Rowen's analysis. Coefficients for education and income in Table 2.2, although slightly higher, closely approximate those reported by Rowen in Table 2.1.



SOURCE: Matrix Information and Directory Services, Inc.

Figure 2.2 World Connectivity

Referring to the univariate analysis in Table 2.2, RAND reports that:

A strong correlation between democracy and interconnectivity does, indeed, exist...the correlation coefficient for interconnectivity is not only large, it is substantially larger than that of any other traditional predictors of democracy.[95]

Table 2.2
Multiple Variables versus Democracy (RAND)

Variable	Adjusted R^2
Interconnectivity	.533
Education	.449
Income	.325
Life Expectancy	.281
Ethnicity	.073
Population (log)	-.008

Note: Significance values not provided.

[95] Ibid.

Multiple linear regression yields much of the same if not more conclusive results. Table 2.3 shows the results of 4 multiple linear regression models computed in the RAND study.[96] Since a single regression model can often result in spurious determinations, varying the model provides a more representative picture of the results. Model I includes all six of the prospective predictors analyzed in the RAND study, and clearly demonstrates that connectivity is a powerful predictor of democracy. The RAND report states of Model I that:

> *Immediately apparent is that, again, interconnectivity emerges as the dominant predictor. With greater than 99.9 percent certainty, higher than that for any other predictor, one can reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between democracy and interconnectivity. Furthermore, the coefficient on interconnectivity is large. A single point increase on the interconnectivity scale corresponds to an increase of 5 points in democracy rating.*[97]

Model II narrows down the analysis, examining only 3 independent variables (income, natural logarithm of population and interconnectivity). With three variables excluded—including the second most powerful variable, education—the adjusted coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) drops only slightly from Model I to Model II, indicating the relatively high predictive power of interconnectivity. Further, although not indicated in Figure 2.3, the report states that:

> *Alternatively, when retaining those three variables [education, life expectancy and literacy] and excluding interconnectivity, the goodness of fit measure decreases by more than twice as much. In other words, interconnectivity alone may be more important for predicting the level of democracy than these three independent variables combined.*[98]

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

Table 2.3
Multiple Regression Models (RAND)

	I	II	III		IV		
Dep. Variable	DEM*	DEM*	DEM*	INT*	DEM*	INT*	GDP*
Adj. R^2	0.583	0.536	0.583	0.832	0.472	0.833	0.597
Const. Democracy	61.7[b]	36.1[a]	31.5[b]	-1.14[c]	35.9[c]	-1.30	1407
				-0.0102		0.0126	-30.5
Interconnectivity	4.43[a]	5.57[a]	4.72[b]		8.82[a]		1478.00[a]
Income	-0.0014[c]	-0.0008	-		-0.0034[c]	0.00009	
			0.0015				
Log(Population)	-4.21[b]	-3.48[b]	-		-4.09[b]		
			4.21[b]				
Education	4.81[b]		4.61[b]				-288
Life Expectancy	-0.076[c]		-0.75[c]		-0.1.29		
Ethnicity	0.13		0.13		0.12		
Literacy				0.034[b]		0.033[b]	
Telephones				0.22[a]		0.19[b]	

Note: Significance is indicated by notes:

[a] = Significance at the 0.1 percent level
[b] = Significance at the 1 percent level
[c] = Significance at the 10 percent level

*Legend:

DEM = democracy variable
INT = interconnectivity variable
GDP = income variable

The single variable regression results, in conjunction with the Model I and II multiple variable regression findings establish a strong correlation between interconnectivity and democracy. They do not, however, establish causation. Perhaps interconnectivity correlates well with democracy because democratic societies demand greater access to new and improved methods of communication. If this is the case then although connectivity correlates well with democracy, it does not contribute to the emergence of democracy.

Model III addresses this issue of causation using a system of simultaneous equations and two-stage least squares estimation. This model assumes that interconnectivity affects democracy and that democracy affects interconnectivity. Both interconnectivity and democracy are examined as dependent variables, comparing the relative significance and the size of resulting coefficients between the two equations. Because both variables (democracy and interconnectivity) are independent variables in separate equations, at least one additional

variable called an "instrumental variable" is needed for each equation. For the connectivity calculation, literacy and telephone lines per capita are used as instrumental variables, and for the democracy calculation, income, education, log of population, life expectancy and ethnicity are used. Results of Model III are listed in Table 2.3. Interconnectivity remains a statistically significant predictor of democracy with a coefficient that is even higher than produced by the prior two regression models. The effect of democracy on interconnectivity, however, is not statistically significant, indicating that the proposition that democracy causes interconnectivity can be rejected.

Another possible explanation for the observed pattern of correlation between interconnectivity and democracy is that a third variable is causing both. The logical candidate would be income, since network connectivity is relatively expensive, especially in lesser developed or developing countries where democratic transitions will likely occur. Model IV tests this hypothesis much in the same manner as Model III, but using three simultaneous equations instead of two. The results are consistent with the previous three models. RAND states that:

> *The 2SLS [two-stage least squares estimation] results...are consistent with all those that preceded and do not support the hypothesis of economic development as the confounding third variable. Strongly to the contrary, the regression coefficients for interconnectivity on democracy and GDP are both substantial and statistically significant, again above the 0.1 percent level. Neither democracy nor GDP proves to influence interconnectivity strongly.*[99]

Viewed as a whole, the RAND data establishes a convincing case that expansion of interconnectivity—or the Internet—is a powerful tool for the expansion of democracy. The study concludes that:

> *Despite inherent limitations of statistical analyses, every analytic perspective of this study coherently and repeatedly emphasizes interconnectivity is a powerful predictor of democracy, more so than any of democracy's traditional correlates.*[100]

From a policy perspective, if a central goal of United States national security policy is to support the expansion of democracy abroad, then it is clear that "the United States should support increased interconnectivity abroad, as this may aid the spread of democracy."[101]

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[99] Ibid.

In addition to the quantitative analyses presented above, the RAND study also postulates mechanisms underlying the democratising effect of networking technologies:

> *The worldwide expansion of democracy may have less to do with how these technologies favor domestic democratic processes than with how they spread democratic ideals internationally. Information revolution technologies enable citizens of prospective democracies to learn more about how other societies operate. If they discover that others living elsewhere live better thanks to democratic governance, they are likely to seek democratization. At the same time, information revolution technologies empower citizens anywhere to broadcast charges that their own governments have violated inalienable human rights. Thus, world pressure can be brought to bear against repressive regimes unable to hide their misdeeds as successfully as before.*[102]

This argument closely parallels those theoretical arguments previously advanced regarding the mechanisms with which the Internet promotes democracy. Along with the quantitative data upon which this explanation is based, this argument encapsulates the proposition that a common thread—the availability of bi-directional, free, and democratic communication on a global scale—runs deep through the process of democratization.

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

III. INTERNET AND DEMOCRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Advancing theoretical arguments and statistical evidence that the Internet facilitates the process of democratization provides a framework within which the Internet's democratizing potential in specific states can be analyzed. Such a discussion does not, however, provide conclusive evidence of what effects the Internet will have on the culture, politics and society within a particular state. As with other technological innovations, the social and political effects of the Internet vary from state to state and from region to region. While the "what may be possible" discussion of the previous chapter is instructional, an in-depth analysis of how the Internet is currently impacting upon the states of Southeast Asia is necessary in order to properly assess its democratizing potential in the region.

The Internet is alive and well in many of the states of Southeast Asia, and is expanding at a furious rate. If the general proposition, that the Internet facilitates democracy, is true then the Internet-connected states of Southeast Asia will likely provide at least a few examples of this process in action. This is the focus of this chapter and the next, testing the propositions regarding the Internet's democratizing potential against the reality of the Internet experience in Southeast Asia to date. The objective here is not to perform a rigorous hypothesis testing, but instead to present empirical examples that clearly illustrate the causal logic, that throughout much of Southeast Asia the Internet is increasing the likelihood of further democratization.

The thesis presented in this chapter—that the Internet is contributing to the facilitation of democratization in Southeast Asia—rests on two important propositions:

> *(1) Several regimes in Southeast Asia are, for whatever reasons, placing tremendous emphasis on promoting continued economic growth and prosperity, and, in the process, are finding that in today's information age, widespread access to the global Internet is nearly a pre-requisite to continued high growth levels.*
>
> *(2) The Internet, by its nature, does not permit partial absorption nor once it is unleashed does it lend itself to authoritarian control; it is essentially a self-propelled, take-it-or-leave-it, all or nothing technology.*

The dilemma created for autocrats by these two realities and the manner in which they choose to respond encapsulates much of the Internet experience in Southeast Asia today.

A. OVERVIEW

It is apparent from the graphical presentation in Figure 2.2 that the level of Internet connectivity in Southeast Asia is low in comparison with much of the world. However, this general observation oversimplifies the Southeast Asian Internet phenomenon. In Singapore, for example, one in three households has a computer and 10 percent of those households access the Internet, making it the most connected state in Asia.[103] Given Singapore's strong commitment to building a National Information Infrastructure designed to link every home, office and government ministry, it is likely that Singapore will become the most connected country in the world within the next 5-10 years.[104] The level of connectivity in Malaysia, on the other hand, is much lower. Yet the level of connectivity seriously understates the impact of the Internet in Malaysia. A high rate of Internet expansion, coupled with powerful institutional structures enabling its development have magnified the relative economic and political impact of the Internet in Malaysia.[105]

Other states verify Fig. 2.2's visual representation. Notwithstanding an extremely limited number of officially sanctioned government, business and academic connections, Burma has essentially excluded the Internet from its borders.[106] Vietnam has permitted much more Net access than Burma, but only within the context of tight government controls that essentially exclude individuals, groups and institutions from gaining any meaningful access to the Internet. E-mail is the only widely available Internet service in Vietnam, and even that is

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[103] Gene Mesher, "The Internet in Asia," *Internet World*, [magazine on-line] 1 Dec. 1996, 56; available http://www.internetworld.com/1996/12/asia.html; Internet; accessed 12 July 1997.

[104] Edna Reid, "Strategic Utilization of Internet: Singapore's IT200 and Library 2000 Plans" [on-line] (paper delivered at the 62nd IFLA General Conference, 25-31 Aug. 1996); available http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/IV/ifla62/62-reie.htm; Internet; accessed 12 July 1997.

[105] Stephanie Langenfeld, "How Commerce Conquers Censorship in Southeast Asia," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Mar. 1997; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997; and "Malaysia's Information Ambitions: Virtually Fantastic," *The Economist*, 1 Mar. 1997; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 17 Oct. 1997.

[106] Matthew McAllester, "Censorship on the 'Net: Countries Crack Down on Freedom of Cyber-Speech," *Newsday*, 3 Nov. 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

subject to tight government restrictions.[107] Recent pronouncements indicate that the government may be prepared to relax this policy and to invite greater Internet expansion, but to date these promises have not yielded any meaningful results.[108]

Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia all exhibit structural enabling factors that indicate a strong desire for greater network connectivity, but a lack of telecommunications infrastructure, educated technicians and relatively lower levels of direct foreign investment in high technology manufacturing industries have hampered Internet expansion in these countries.[109] This is not to say that Internet is not expanding in these states, it is. The current level of connectivity and relative rate of expansion, however, is much lower than that of Singapore and Malaysia.

Based on these observations, a useful grouping can be made of the level of Internet activity within the various states of Southeast Asia, in terms of relative level of connectivity, rate of expansion of connectivity, and presence of political and economic enabling or inhibiting factors. Table 3.1 presents such an arrangement. Category I consists of states that exhibit a medium to high level of Internet connectivity with a high rate of expansion and strong structural enabling factors. Category II states display a low to medium level of connectivity, a medium rate of expansion and, as with category I, strong structural enabling factors. Low or non-existent connectivity and strong structural inhibitors to Internet expansion characterize states in category III.[110]

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[107] Martyn Williams, "Vietnam Regulations Part of Power Play for Internet," *Newsbytes News Network*, 10 June 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

[108] Mesher, 56.

[109] Ibid, 56.

[110] Cambodia, Laos and Brunei—states normally grouped within geo-political designation "Southeast Asia"—are neglected in this taxonomy due to unavailability of data. Therefore, these states will not be considered in this thesis.

Table 3.1
Grouping of States by Connectivity and Enabling/Inhibiting Factors

Group I	Group II	Group III
Malaysia	Indonesia	Burma
Singapore	Philippines	Vietnam
	Thailand	

As the level and rate of expansion of Internet connectivity varies from nearly the highest level in the world (Singapore) to one of the lowest (Burma), the degree of democracy across the Southeast Asian political spectrum varies greatly as well. As previously noted, measuring democracy presents difficulties, requiring what is often considered a high degree of subjectivity. In keeping with the bulk of the democratization literature, and in order to maintain consistency with the quantitative analysis presented in Chapter II of this thesis, Freedom House ratings for political rights and civil liberties are utilized as indicators of the relative degree of democracy between states. Table 3.2 summarizes 1996-1997 Freedom House data for the states of Southeast Asia under consideration.[111] Both the political rights and civil liberties ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 indicating the greatest degree of political rights and civil liberties, and 7 indicating the highest degree of repression of these factors.

Independent subjective analysis in the democratization literature of the degree of democracy of the various regimes of Southeast Asia agrees in large part with the Freedom House results. Muthiah Alagappa, senior fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu Hawaii, for instance, presents a strikingly similar assessment of the degree of democracy of the states of Southeast Asia.[112]

Comparing the rough Internet connectivity groupings of Table 3.1 with the Freedom House data of Table 3.2 produces a few obvious inferences. Most significantly, is that the apparent causal relationship between Internet connectivity and democracy—if such a

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[111] Kaplan.

[112] Muthiah Alagappa, "The Asian Spectrum," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy,* 2d ed., ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 342-349.

Table 3.2
Political Rights and Civil Liberties in Southeast Asia
(Freedom House - 1996-1997)

Country	Political Rights	Civil Liberties	Freedom Rating
Burma	7	7	Not Free
Indonesia	7	5	Not Free
Malaysia	4	5	Partly Free
Philippines	2	3	Free
Singapore	4	5	Partly Free
Thailand	3	3	Partly Free
Vietnam	7	7	Not Free

relationship exists—is not absolute. If the relationship were absolute, then one would expect all states with strong political rights and civil liberties ratings to be categorized in Group I. However, some states with relatively lower Freedom House ratings (indicating higher degrees of political rights and civil liberties), such as Thailand and the Philippines, are categorized in Group II, the median of the connectivity scale. This is consistent with the RAND quantitative analysis. Only a portion (roughly one-half) of the RAND data is consistent with the connectivity-democracy relationship.

Those countries ranked as most repressive by Freedom House, specifically Burma and Vietnam, also represent the lowest levels of Internet connectivity and growth in region. Of course this is simply an intuitive look at the data and in no way indicates statistical significance. It is important to note as well that the two countries categorized in Group I as having the highest degree of connectivity (Singapore and Malaysia) are nearly as close to Burma and Vietnam in Freedom House rating as to Thailand and the Philippines. Additionally, Freedom House ranks Indonesia as having the same level of political rights and only a slightly improved degree of civil liberties than either Burma or Vietnam, yet Indonesia has significantly higher connectivity than either of these states.

Freedom of the press is a specific civil liberty included within the Freedom House civil liberties calculation for each country. Press freedom is a critical variable that warrants

independent consideration when assessing the Internet's democratizing potential for three reasons. First press freedom is a central defining characteristic of democracy. Dahl's "procedural minimal" approach to defining democracy encompasses a number of political rights and three key civil liberties: freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of association.[113] In the context of the Internet, freedom of expression and freedom of the press are inseparably bound since the Net empowers individuals with the power of the press as a form of self-expression. Secondly, as argued in Chapter II, the mechanisms with which the Internet facilitates democratization rely primarily upon the Internet's empowerment of groups and individuals with the power of the press and expression, and to a lesser degree in the Net's ability to encourage new and different forms of association. Finally, as will become apparent later in this thesis when discussing the specific political effects the Internet has had in Malaysia and Indonesia, the primary impact of the net on these two autocratic regimes has been to bring about a marked softening in the restrictions placed upon freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

In a separate annual report on Press Freedom around the world, Freedom House rates each state's level of press freedom through the assessment of four factors: laws and regulations than influence media content, political pressures and controls on media content, economic influences over media content, and repressive actions such as killing or jailing of journalists, censorship, self-censorship, harassment, etc. Table 3.3 is the Freedom House 1997 Press Freedom data for the previously discussed countries of Southeast Asia.[114] The first three measures span a one to fifteen scale with one representing the greatest degree of freedom and fifteen the greatest degree of coercion and control. The last measure, repressive actions, spans a similarly positioned scale of one to five. Not surprisingly the press freedom ratings in Table 3.3 closely parallel the individual civil liberties rating and overall freedom rating of each state reported in Table 3.2.

B. ECONOMIC NECESSITIES

The data presented above for at least three of the countries of Southeast Asia, namely Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore, and also possibly Vietnam (where public Internet access is

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[113] Schmitter and Karl, 49.

[114] Leonard R. Sussman, ed., *Press Freedom 1997: Law Epidemic* [book on-line] (n. p.: Freedom House, 1997); available http://www.freedomhouse.org/Press/Press97/index.html; Internet; accessed 26 Oct. 1997.

Table 3.3
Press Freedom in Southeast Asia
(Freedom House - 1997)

Country		Laws	Pressure	Econ.	Repression	Total	Rating
Burma	Broadcast	15	15	15	4	99	Not Free
	Print	15	15	15	5		
Indonesia	Broadcast	12	15	3	5	77	Not Free
	Print	10	15	12	5		
Malaysia	Broadcast	10	14	5	1	61	Not Free
	Print	10	13	7	1		
Philippines	Broadcast	5	8	8	2	46	Partially
	Print	5	7	9	2		Free
Singapore	Broadcast	13	8	7	0	66	Not Free
	Print	13	10	15	0		
Thailand	Broadcast	7	7	2	0	34	Partially
	Print	5	5	5	3		Free
Vietnam	Broadcast	14	14	0	0	69	Not Free
	Print	14	14	10	3		

at least being contemplated) raises two important questions: (1) Given the open and anarchic nature of the Internet, why would a dictator, whose rule is based upon predictability and control, invite or even allow the Internet to enter his country? (2) If allowing Internet access became a necessity, why would this same autocratic not severely restrict it to such an extent so as to negate its politically destabilizing effects? The latter of these two questions is addressed in the following section; here the former is examined.

The authoritarian leaders of these countries see information-based high technology investments as a key factor in building competitive, growth-driven economies. An advanced telecommunications infrastructure, for instance, is now recognized throughout Southeast Asia as an essential element in achieving economic competitiveness.[115] Information technology

[115] Mark L. Clifford, "Asia's Furious Phone Derby," *Business Week International*, 17 Feb. 1997; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 17 Oct. 1997.

projects of previously unheard of size and scope are quickly becoming commonplace within these aspiring "dragon" economies. Mayalsia's new Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), for example, is an information technology investment of unprecedented proportion, touting an estimated price tag in excess of $40 billion for construction costs alone.[116] Singapore's Sembawang Media is at the center of a major international consortium whose goal is to establish an Asian Internet backbone. Singapore stands to become the Internet hub for all of Southeast Asia.[117]

The Internet of course is the driving force for the information revolution. For the developing states of Southeast Asia, Internet investments produce a number of concurrent results. First, in the short term, coupled with Southeast Asia's relatively cheap labor costs, state-subsidized tax incentives, and potential future market, they provide serious enticement to American, Japanese and European information technology manufacturers. In the telecommunications market alone an estimated $18 billion flowed to Southeast Asia in 1996, a number that is expected to top $30 billion by the year 2000.[118] Second, information technology and the Internet in particular are seen by Southeast Asian economic planners as an effective tool with which to "leapfrog" into the twenty-first century, bypassing several generations of already obsolete technologies and skipping past "decades of painful development" that the developed Western world was forced to endure.[119] Third, the Internet promises to qualitatively improve the education level of the workforce, helping to bring about the "knowledge worker" that the information technology sector so badly needs.[120]

Perceived economic necessity in order to ensure future long-term economic growth, then, is the reason that the Internet and other information technologies are openly courted in the autocratic states of Southeast Asia. Ramo argues that "Information, it turns out, is a far-

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[116] "Malaysia's Information Ambitions: Virtually Fantastic."

[117] Mesher, 56.

[118] Clifford.

[119] Mesher, 56; and Ramo.

[120] Ramo.

better-financed candidate than its opponent. The real force behind info openness is not political idealism by economic reality."[121]

Of course the arrival of the Internet in Southeast Asia has not occurred without problems for autocratic regimes. Increased connectivity has necessarily resulted in a degradation of political control. Stephanie Langenfeld, junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, argues that:

> *New high-tech firms depend upon free flows of information for success in the marketplace. As a result, corporations investing in Southeast Asia are insisting on the establishment of freedom of expression, unintentionally taking on traditional roles of foreign-policymakers—promoting both economic and political liberalization.*[122]

This is true because, as will be explored in depth later, the Internet is nearly impossible to control, and any form of control that were to be effective would likely backfire on the regime, negating many of the benefits that the Internet provides. Foreign investors and firms fear that arbitrary controls on the Internet will eventual hamper information flows and are therefore more reluctant to invest in countries where such controls are planned or attempted. In Singapore, where strict controls are enforced over Internet content with regard to pornography, religion, race and politics, officials have learned a hard lesson. Neighboring Malaysia, with a less impressive infrastructure, has successfully courted a number of American information technology giants (such as Microsoft and Sun) to locate their East Asian regional headquarters in Malaysia instead of Singapore. The Malaysian MSC Bill of Guarantees, which promises against any form of future Internet censorship was a key deciding factor.[123]

Christopher Kedzie has coined this phenomenon the "Dictator's Dilemma," arguing that "greater connectivity can come only at the expense of political control."[124] Presenting the final years of the Soviet Union as a textbook example, Kedzie contends that Gorbachev

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[121] Ibid.

[122] Langenfeld.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Christopher R. Kedzie, "The Third Waves" [on-line] (paper presented at the Information, National Policies, and International Infrastructure Conference, Harvard Law School, 28-30 Jan. 1996); available http://ksgwww.harvard.edu/iip/GIIconf/kedzie.html; Internet; accessed 29 Oct. 1997. Kedzie authored Chapter 6, "International Implications for Global Democratization," for the previously cited RAND report (Anderson et al.) on universal access to e-mail.

sought the economic benefits that information technologies offered but failed in his ability to maintain political control over those technologies.[125] Additionally, using the RAND dataset and additional historical data from Freedom House, Kedzie performed a regression analysis of the change in democracy from 1983 to 1993 versus the change in connectivity for that same time period for all countries in the dataset. His conclusion, with a confidence factor of greater than 99.9 percent, is that "there is not a single case of even a moderate increase in the level of interconnectivity that is not also accompanied by at least a moderate increase in the level of democracy."[126]

Ironically then, the authoritarian regime that seeks to bolster its position by attempting to harness the economic riches that information technologies offer may instead be sowing the seeds of its own demise. In a more detailed examination of the impact of the Internet in Malaysia and Indonesia in Chapter IV, it will become apparent that the Internet has already resulted in some degree of loss of political control in both states.

C. GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL THE INTERNET

If the leaders of a state desire to forego the economic advantages presented by the Internet, they may choose to do so. A regime that foresees the dangers presented by the Net can choose, as Burma and to a lesser extent Vietnam have chosen, to exclude the Internet from its borders. Or an autocrat may choose to allow the Internet—and in fact even encourage its spread within the country—while maintaining a tight level of control over the content that it carries. Finally, a regime may allow unfettered Internet access, accepting minor losses in political control, yet explicitly planning to withdraw full Internet access (through either of the two mechanisms mentioned) if the regime's power becomes threatened in any way. This is the conventional wisdom displayed by several of the autocratic regimes of Southeast Asia.

Singapore, for example, has devised and implemented an elaborate system of monitoring, control and censorship over Internet content. The Singapore Broadcasting Authority (SBA) attempts to regulate Internet content through the "Internet Content

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

Guidelines," which prohibits the transmission or receipt of any material that is pornographic or offensive, that does not respect racial and religious harmony, or that in any way jeopardises or undermines public security and national defence. The following is a selected excerpt from the SBA's "Internet Content Guidelines":

> *The following Internet contents should not be allowed:*
>
> *4. Public Security and National Defence*
>
> *a. Contents which jeopardise public security or national defence.*
>
> *b. Contents which undermine the public confidence in the administration of justice.*
>
> *c. Contents which present information or events in such a way that alarms or misleads any or all of the public.*
>
> *d. Contents which tend to bring the Government into hatred or contempt, or which excite disaffection again the Government.*[127]

Employing a sophisticated system of proxy servers and full-time censors, the SBA effectively "blocks" access to undesirable Internet materials by Singaporeans. Peng Hwa Ang, lecturer at the School of Communication Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and Berlinda Nadarajan, member of the Policy and Survey Unit and the National Computer Board, Singapore, write that government authorities justify Internet censorship based on the belief that uninhibited reporting can lead to racial and ethnic violence.[128] Ang and Nadarajan also mention five times within the space of a detailed seven page essay that technologically based censorship, such as that being attempted by the SBA, is not feasible, concluding that, "The Singapore government is well aware that it cannot do much to censure the Internet."[129] And finally, in what appears to be support for Kedzie's "Dictator's Dilemma" theory, Ang and Nadarajan state that:

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[127] Singapore Broadcasting Authority, *SBA Safeguards Community Interest through Internet Regulation*, [on-line] (press releaase) 11 July 1996; available http://www.eff.org/~declan/global/sg/regulations.071196.release; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

[128] Peng Hwa Ang and Berlinda Nadarajan, "Censorship and the Internet: A Singapore Perspective," *Communications of the ACM* 39 (June 1996): 73.

[129] Ibid., 78.

Singapore's case is instructive in that it is trying to both control information and yet reap the benefits of the information age. Current thinking suggests that it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve both aims. Singapore is trying nonetheless.[130]

Internet technology experts agree. Nicholas Negroponte, head of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Lab argues that, "The use of centralist means to censor the Net is doomed to failure, unless you simply frighten people into silence."[131] Even that may difficult to achieve given the proliferation of free cryptographic software and the emergence of circumvention technologies such as International Discount Telecommunications' international call back service that allows a user anywhere in the world to connect to the net using a private international telephone line at cheap U.S. phone rates.[132] Frightening people into submission appears to be working in states such as Burma and Vietnam that have never had a meaningful level of computer network access. In the remainder of the states of Southeast Asia, however, where the Internet has become relatively established, and where a number of users have developed a degree of sophistication and savvy with regard to the technical limitations of government monitoring and censorship techniques, it is conceivable that effectiveness of self-censorship may soon dissipate. Signs of such a move are already surfacing in Indonesia and Malaysia where an increasing number of individuals regularly read government banned publications on the Internet.

Finally, it is important to reiterate the key issue involved in authoritarian control of Internet access and content; it is unlikely if not impossible for a regime to reap the economic benefits that information technologies such as the Internet present while simultaneously attempting to centrally control them. Only Singapore has attempted such a policy. Indonesia and Malaysia, regimes that Freedom House (Table 3.3) has identified as severely repressive in terms of freedom of the press, have foregone any serious attempts to control or censor the Internet.

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[130] Ibid., 78.

[131] Nicholas Negroponte, quoted in Simon Fluendy, "Pandora's Box: Asian Regimes Struggle to Keep a Lid on the Net," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 159 (26 Sep. 1996): 71-72.

[132] Richard Sagall, "Slipping Through the Net," *Economist*, 4 June 1994; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

D. EFFECTS ON "ASIAN CULTURE"

Perhaps the most contentious issue facing the Internet's arrival and spread through Southeast Asia today is the perception by some that the Internet is a 1990s version of American imperialism—cybercolonization if you will. Singapore's Information Minister warns that, "the influx of objectionable materials via the new electronic media, if left unchecked, will undermine our values and traditions."[133] United States attempts to promote democracy in Southeast Asia are frequently greeted with same claim. Alagappa contends that in China, Vietnam, Burma, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Laos:

> *The same elites who support economic development reject democracy. In part their rejection of the democratic ideal is a response to the perceived 'reactionary imperialism' of the West. In part it is aimed at preserving their own power. Yet it also stems from a conviction that liberal democracy is not well suited to Asian cultures and that it will hinder modernization.*[134]

Western individualism is the real culprit according to Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia.[135] In the "Asian culture" they so admire, individuals submit to the authority of family and state in what is perceived as a Confucian tradition, while in the West individualism has run amok, resulting in decadence, disorder and decay.

Democratization theorists have addressed this proposition directly. Samuel P. Huntington does not accept the argument that "Asian culture" rejects democracy but he does point out that the Asian tradition may present a significant obstacle to further democratization in Asia.[136] Francis Fukuyama, on the other hand, argues that such characterizations of Asian culture are simply "self-serving distortions of Confucianism" designed for the sole purpose of maintaining the status quo for existing autocrats.[137] Fukuyama contends that:

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[133] George Yeo, Singapore Information Minister, quoted in Henderson.

[134] Alagappa, 343.

[135] Schlesinger, 9.

[136] Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy,* 2d ed., ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3-25.

[137] Francis Fukuyama, "The Primacy of Culture," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy,* 2d ed., ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 325.

> *There is no theoretical reason why Confucian social structures could not coexist perfectly well with democratic political institutions. Indeed, the case can be made that democratic institutions would be considerably strengthened by them.*[138]

This argument is relevant to the question of the Internet's democratizing potential in Southeast Asia only to the extent that "Asian culture" has the potential to preclude the emergence of democracy no matter the facilitating factors that may be present. Such conditions are extremely unlikely given the empirical evidence of democratization in recent past. Fukuyama states that:

> *Other Asian societies, such as Taiwan and Korea have been moving toward a very recognizable form of Western democracy in the past decade without thereby losing their Confucian character.*[139]

This thesis does not that contend the further democratization is necessarily likely in Southeast Asia, only that further expansion of the Internet in Southeast Asia will contribute to the likelihood that more states will transition to democracy. The important point here is that there is nothing peculiar about Asian societies or Confucianism that precludes a democratic transition. Shin, in his review of the literature of the third wave, states that a number of authors (Giuseppe Di Palma, Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl) and "many other scholars generally agree that democracy can be crafted and promoted so as to survive and grow even in a culturally and structurally unfavorable environment."[140] Strobe Talbott summarizes this central lesson of the third wave when he argues that:

> *This globe-spanning sequence of events—which has included the grassroots Chinese democracy movement of 1989, the elections in the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia, and the more recent voting that legitimized the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jerico and gave Taiwan its first freely chosen president—should have discredited the claim that democracy is exclusively a Western idea. It should have laid to rest the contention that some peoples and cultures are unsuited to democracy—that Asians are predisposed to live under Confucian authoritarians, Latin Americans under caudillos or camandantes, Africans under tribal chiefs, Arabs and Persians under repressive theorcrats, Russsians under czars or commissars.*[141]

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[138] Ibid., 326.

[139] Ibid., 325.

[140] Shin, 161.

[141] Talbott, 55.

Claims of Asian exceptionalism based on an amorphous conception of "Asian culture" reflect more of an autocratic defense mechanism than a valid prediction of the likelihood of future democratization in Southeast Asia. The existing reality that the Dictator's Dilemma presents to many Southeast Asian rulers underscores this fact. These rulers have each made conscious decisions to invite and often promote a strong Internet presence within their state. The need for expanding wealth and income obviously outweighs the feared cultural and social chaos that the Internet—the bastion of Western individualism—threatens to bring.

IV. CASE STUDIES – MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA

Malaysia and Indonesia offer instructive insights into the democratizing power of the Internet. These states were chosen for deeper analysis for two reasons. First, the availability of existing data on and analysis of the Internet in the majority of countries in Southeast Asia is sparse to non-existent. These two states, along with Singapore, provide the largest quantity of available information.

Second, these states appear to offer the most conducive environments for testing the Internet's impact on society and political economy. Referring back to the rough grouping of states presented in Table 3.1, a study of Group III states (where the Internet is almost wholly excluded) would prove futile since there is little or no Internet activity upon which to base an examination. In Group II, Freedom House (Table 3.2) rates the Philippines as "Free" and Thailand as "Partly Free," assigning relatively impressive political rights and civil liberties ratings to each. Democratic improvements in these states—caused by the Internet or any other phenomenon—may be more difficult to observe than in a state that is characteristically undemocratic. Additional, it is likely that both Thailand and the Philippines are best described as in the consolidation phase of the democratization process rather than the transitioning phase. This is important because, as Chapter II demonstrated, the expected effects of the Internet upon democratic transition are much greater than those expected during consolidation. Indonesia, the third state in Group II, however, provides fertile ground for examining the role of the Internet in bringing about a possible democratic transition. Freedom House rates Indonesia as "Not Free" with political rights and civil liberties ratings that are only slightly better than those assigned to Burma and Vietnam, the most repressive regimes in Southeast Asia.

Choosing between Malaysia and Singapore, the Group I states, was more difficult, and, admittedly, more subjective. Both states are rated as "Partly Free" with identical scores for political rights and civil liberties. The level of Internet connectivity in Singapore is clearly greater than that of Malaysia, making it the seemingly obvious choice for study. Singapore's massive program designed to regulate Internet content, however, has clouded the issue.

Although there is a near universal consensus that such controls will be ineffective, so far the Internet appears to have had little measurable effect on society, culture or politics in Singapore. Some cracks are becoming visible[142], but none of significant merit to indicate that the Internet is having any meaningful effect in altering Singapore's authoritarian status. Malaysia, then, was chosen for analysis because of the profound impact that the Internet is having upon Malaysian politics.

The foregoing discussion makes clear that the cases of Malaysia and Indonesia are not intended as "representative" or "average" examples of the effects of the Internet in Southeast Asia, but are more appropriately classified as "best case" examples of the causal relationship that this thesis presents. These cases are not offered for purposes of hypothesis-testing but instead are illustrative examples of the power of the Internet to bring about changes conducive to democratization. Therefore, inferring that the cases of Malaysia and Indonesia have widespread applicability for the rest of Southeast Asia (or elsewhere) is problematic. At best these cases present a solid rejection of the null hypothesis, that the Internet plays no role in facilitating democratic transition.

A. MALAYSIA

Malaysia, an ethnically diverse country of 20 million, has been ruled since 1981 by Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad, a Western-schooled physician. Mahathir's policies have aimed at achieving two primary goals: gaining economic and social equality for the ethnic Malay population (who constitute a slim majority) while ending racial hatred and violence, and maintaining high levels of economic growth. By nearly all measures Mahathir has succeeded at achieving these goals. To date, his affirmative action program has resulted in an improved distribution of wealth without inciting any significant level of racial violence.[143] Economically,

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[142] As previously mentioned, Malaysia's ability to attract high tech US business away from Singapore may be a reflection of Singapore's decision to limit Internet access. This could possibly be the cause of Singapore's recent decision in October 1997 to downplay the extent of its Internet censorship regulations. In a press release issued by the Singapore Broadcasting Authority on 22 October 1997 (SBA, "SBA Revises Internet Guidelines for Clarity and Simplicity," [on-line] (press release) 22 Oct. 1997; available http://www.sba.gov.sg/newsrel.htm#p26; Internet; accessed 2 Nov. 1997.), the SBA stresses the guidelines are intended for regulating pornography and incitement of racial and religious violence only. No mention is made of the political limitations imposed by the original guidelines. The regulatory effects of these new guidelines are, as of yet, unclear.

[143] Anthony Spaeth, "Bound for Glory: He's Obsessed with Control and Quick to Bash the West, but Mahathir Mohammad Has Left His Mark on Malaysia," *Time International*, 9 Dec. 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 17 Oct. 1997.

Mahathir's success is almost unmatched. With nearly zero percent unemployment and eight years of continuous 8 percent economic growth, Malaysia's economy has grown faster than any country except China.[144]

With half of the population now living in cities and a per capita income of $3,900 per year (double the level of six years ago), Malaysia is no longer a country of peasant farmers.[145] Manufactured goods, most prominently semiconductors, microchips, and advanced electronics, account for 80 percent of Malaysia's exports.[146] Donald Snodgrass, an economist at Harvard, says that Malaysia is one of the only ethnically diverse states that has been able make the transition from a manufacturing economy to a high tech economy while maintaining a respectable degree of economic equity for a diverse spectrum of the population.[147]

Mahathir's success, however, has not come without a price. Many of his grand development projects have benefited political cronies and several, such as his attempt to build an indigenous steel industry, have ended in total failure.[148] Perhaps more important, however, Mahathir has ruled Malaysia harshly, squashing nearly all vestiges of political dissent, opposing nearly every move toward any form of democratic government, and severely limiting political rights and civil liberties. Anthony Spaeth reports that:

> *To consolidate power in the mid-1980s, Mahathir showed a vast disdain for such notions as freedom of speech and judicial review of executive actions. In 1988, he ended the independence of the country's British-style judiciary by deftly amending the constitution.*[149]

Malaysian officials deal harshly with any public questioning or criticism of government policy or leadership. The Official Secrets Act requires a mandatory jail term for possession of classified material, a term that has come to mean nearly any government document. Laws regulate speech not only in public but in parliament as well. Specifically, the government forbids any discussion of citizenship rights for non-Malays or of the special privileges granted

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144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 Donald Snodgrass, quoted in Ibid.

148 Ibid. For example, Perwaja Steel recently filed for bankruptcy, after losses of $2.75 billion.

149 Ibid.

Malays. The government monitors and censors the press as well.[150] Previously presented data from Freedom House (Tables 3.2 and 3.3) affirm the characterization of Mahathir's regime as repressive, with little concern for political rights or civil liberties.

1. The Internet Arrives in Malaysia

On a scale probably only possible under the firm guiding hand of a man with the power, determination and ambition of Mahathir, the Internet is arriving in Malaysia. Mahathir has undertaken what can only be considered the largest, most expensive high technology infrastructure project in history. The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is a 9-by-30 mile zone running south from Kuala Lumpur. This project, occupying 750 square kilometers (an area larger than Singapore) and costing an estimated $40 billion, includes the biggest airport in Asia, a new national capital city, an "intelligent" city called Cyberjaya, two "telesuburbs," both a technology park and an "intellectual-property park," and a new multimedia university.[151] In addition, Telkom Malaysia is constructing a $2 billion fibre-optic telecommunications backbone for the MSC.[152]

The MSC project is designed to provide a perfect environment for the creation, distribution and employment of multimedia products and services. Mahathir has made the project his top priority, stating the MSC provides an opportunity to capitalize upon the knowledge, resources and wealth of the developed world.[153] The project provides incentives for direct foreign investment by United States, Japanese and European high technology firms, special exemptions authorizing unlimited employment of foreign "knowledge workers" and a ten-year exemption from any tax of profits earned within the corridor.[154]

Two final features of the MSC project are worthy of mention. The project calls for the wiring of all regions, local governments, and schools throughout Malaysia to the global Internet.[155] This provision is consistent with Mahathir's prior track record of attempting to

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[150] Langenfeld.

[151] "Malaysia's Information Ambitions: Virtually Fantastic."

[152] Ibid.

[153] Langenfeld.

[154] "Malaysia's Information Ambitions: Virtually Fantastic."

[155] Langenfeld.

share equitably at least a portion of the wealth generated by national economic projects with a broad spectrum of Malaysian society. Finally, of primary concern to the analysis of social and political change that the MSC may bring to Malaysia, the project includes a "MSC Bill of Guarantees" that promises prospective investors that the Internet will not be censored (at least within the MSC.)[156] Discussing the MSC project, Langenfeld reports that:

> *The crux of the package, however, is an offer Malaysia can make above and beyond its regional competitors: the commitment against censorship of the Internet under the MSC Bill of Guarantees. In response, a number of companies have made Malaysia their East Asian regional headquarters.*[157]

As previously discussed, a few key corporations, such as Microsoft and Sun, have already made the important decision to base their Southeast Asian headquarters in Malaysia instead of Singapore.

2. Internet Effects Upon Malaysia's Autocracy

Nonetheless, there are indications that the Dictator's Dilemma persists in Malaysia, and that Mahathir has liberalized his repressive policies regarding freedom of expression and the press, at least with regard to the Internet, only for the purpose of attracting foreign technology investment dollars. Langenfeld argues that:

> *As Prime Minister Mahathir himself has expressed, the information technology revolution is irreversible. In order to attract investors, the Malaysian government was forced to face its history of strict control of public speech.*[158]

Dr. Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, director general of the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (MIMOS), adamantly asserts official policy regarding the Internet in stating that Malaysia is "at the moment quite fixed on the idea that there should be no censorship."[159] Shariffadeen goes on to state that the reason for this policy is that "the Internet is an instrument for democratizing societies...And we would like to show that, by example in a

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156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid.

159 Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, quoted in May Jurilla, "No Censorship on the Internet, Says Malaysian Government," *Newsbytes News Network*, 28 Mar. 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

country like Malaysia, we would like people to participate in governance—the transparency of government. And of course, the private sector as well can be facilitated by the Internet."[160]

Such grand statements aside, the best evidence of the potential democratising power of the Internet in Malaysia can be found on the Internet itself. Joseph Edwin, Hubert Humphrey fellow at the University of Maryland, argues that the arrival of the unregulated Internet has enabled "computer literate Malaysians to speak their minds without fear of retribution, albeit anonymously through fake addresses that make it impossible to track down the original author."[161] Self-censorship is not necessary on the Internet as the technology allows anonymity.

Opposition political parties have seized the occasion as well. Edwin reports that, "A month ago, the Opposition Democratic Action Party discreetly set up its home page on the World Wide Web, with unedited party views."[162] Edwin provides further examples as well, including the Opposition PanMalaysian Islamic Party, a political party that currently posts its unauthorized party publication *Harakah* on the net. Summarizing these recent moves in Malaysian cyberspace, and observing that "the growing middle class in Malaysia will increasingly desire an open forum to air its views and opinions," Edwin concludes that:

> *While critics argue that in Malaysia the Internet is still in its infancy and only accessible to a few (about one in every 1,000 Malaysians), its long-term effects on the democratization of information appear promising.*[163]

Langenfeld shares this view, contending that the investments of Western-based multinational corporations have had the indirect effect of significantly improving civil liberties. She suggests that as the countryside becomes wired:

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[160] Ibid.

[161] Joseph Edwin, "Malaysia Moves Toward Less Censorship," *USA Today*, 3 May 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

Malaysia's citizens will have access to completely uncensored news for the first time in 30 years, and multinational corporations will have incidentally won more for human rights than many nations have achieved through diplomatic means...The Malaysian case should serve as a model of how private corporations can influence democratization efforts.[164]

The Internet's impact in Malaysia then has been varied. First, as predicted by Kedzie, Malaysia has submitted to the dictator's dilemma: massively increasing Internet connectivity to attract foreign high technology investment, necessarily reduces political control of information. Second, individuals, groups and political parties have discovered that the Internet provides a place to organize, to exchange information and debate substantive issues that are not yet permitted in society at large. Finally, multinational corporations are finding that respect for civil liberties in the states where they base foreign operations is increasingly becoming desirable for creating and competing in the information age. Multinational investment patterns are gravitating toward those states than understand this reality. Malaysia is a case in point.

B. INDONESIA

The Internet experience in Indonesia has been markedly different than in Malaysia. This is understandable given the vast differences between the two countries. The fourth largest country in the world, Indonesia's population tops 200 million.[165] Spread geographically over thousands of miles, the islands of Indonesia represent a tremendous degree of cultural and linguistic diversity. Roughly 90 percent of the population is Muslim, giving Indonesia the largest community of Muslims in the world.[166] This fact by itself, however, is misleading, since a tiny minority of ethnic Chinese wields much of the economic and political power within the country.

President Suharto, sometimes referred to as *Bapak Pembangunan* or Father of Development, has ruled Indonesia for over 30 years. A military officer by profession, Suharto has stifled nearly all of his opposition, eliminating dissent with brutal force. Political rights, civil liberties, and democratic institutions are essentially non-existent under the Suharto regime.[167] At the same time he has succeeded to a large degree in advancing Indonesia

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[164] Langenfeld.

[165] J. Stapleton Roy, "Letter from Jakarta," *SAIS Review* (summer/fall 1997): 77.

[166] Adam Schwarz, "Indonesia After Suharto," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (July/Aug. 1997): 129-130.

[167] Ibid., 120.

economically. Growth rates under Suharto have averaged 6 to 7 percent annually, and billions of dollars of foreign investment have poured into Indonesia.[168] At current rate of expansion, the Indonesian economy may well become the world's sixth largest by the year 2010.[169]

Much of Indonesia's recent economic success has been due a huge expansion in export-led manufacturing in a number of product areas including shoes, electrical appliances and consumer electronics.[170] Indonesia's reliance upon oil for export income has dropped from more than 75 percent in the late 1970s to almost 20 percent today. Manufactured goods and the export of agricultural products have both contributed to reducing Indonesia's dangerous dependence upon oil exports.[171] Unlike the vast majority of his OPEC counterparts, then, Suharto has succeeded in creating a future for Indonesia beyond the volatile and necessarily limited oil business.

Significant gains have been made in per capita income, but not to the extent experienced in Malaysia. Per capita income has risen from $90 in 1968 to $1,000 in 1996.[172] The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta estimates that about 14-18 million (or 8 percent) of the population now belong to Indonesia's quickly expanding middle class (defined as households with annual incomes in excess of $5,000.)[173]

1. Internet Arrives in Indonesia

Information and telecommunication technologies have not played a major role in Indonesia's economic success, but their importance is increasing. Much of Indonesia's gains in the field of high technology has been due to the forceful leadership of B. J. Habibie, the influential Minister for Research and Technology (since 1978), and a man who is said to have been a personal friend of Suharto for over twenty years.[174] Habibie has carefully nurtured an

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[168] Jeffrey E. Garten, "Troubles Ahead in Emerging Markets," *Harvard Business Review* (May/June 1997): 40.

[169] Schwarz, 119.

[170] James Clad, "The End of Indonesia's New Order," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Sep. 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 16 Oct. 1997.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

[174] David T. Hill and Krishna Sen, "Wiring the Warung to Global Gateways: The Internet in Indonesia," *Indonesia.* (spring 1997): 71-72.

entire generation of locally and foreign schooled technologists who share his vision of a national information infrastructure playing a critical role in the future of Indonesia. Habibie's goal has been to acquire the technologies necessary to allow Indonesia to "leapfrog" several generations into position as a leader in the field of high technology. Expansion of the Internet has been a critical feature of this plan.[175]

Indonesia's metropolises greeted the arrival of commercially available Internet services in late 1995 and throughout 1996 with a high level of carefully engineered, government promoted hype touting the benefits of the Net for business. The Internet was advertised as offering everything from on-line employment services to information about the latest Indonesian rock music. The Internet gaining a level of public attention and political clout far in excess of the that which might be reasonable to assume given its small number of connections (about 0.1 percent of the population) through substantial press coverage.[176]

In December 1995, five Internet service provider's (ISPs) were servicing an estimated 15,000 users in Indonesia. By the end of 1996 that number had grown to 15 operating ISPs supplying Internet service to 40,000 users. These numbers likely understate the actual number of users since account and password sharing is common.[177] Originally started by young, relatively independent, Habibie-educated technologists, many of these ISPs have been acquired by conglomerates politically connected to Suharto, his cronies or the military.[178] Personal gain for the ruling elite now provides a strong motivation to further expand Internet services above and beyond the advantages such expansion provides in attracting foreign investment capital.

Indonesia has contributed what can only be considered its own unique version of Internet service to the global push for Internet expansion. In addition to standard home or work based dialup Internet service that is common throughout the world, primarily commercial but also government-operated Internet *warungs*—or kiosks—are emerging in increasing numbers in the major cities and university areas of Indonesia. These *warungs* are public places located in shopping malls and commercial districts that offer Internet service by

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[175] Ibid., 72.

[176] Ibid., 71.

[177] Ibid., 73-74.

[178] Ibid., 73.

the hour to their clientele and that have become quite popular among the young (20-30 year old) professional generation and their up-and-coming university counterparts that comprise the large majority of Internet users in Indonesia. Many *warungs* offer inexpensive service (costing roughly twice the amount of local telephone calls), making the Internet accessible to large spectrum of the population.[179]

Accurate statistics on who is using the Net in Indonesia are non-existant. Commonly used unsourced figures, however, indicate 42.8 percent access from commercial providers, 5.8 percent from research institutes, 29.5 percent from universities, 20.9 percent from government sources and 1 percent from non-governmental organizations.[180] The average user in Indonesia closely mirrors that of the United States and Europe: 25-40 year's old, 70-80 percent male, single or married without children, well educated, in the middle to upper income groups. One significant difference between Indonesian Internet users and their counterparts in the developed world is that a shortage of workplace computers results in more than 50 percent of Indonesian users accessing the Net from home compared with roughly 30 percent in the United States and Europe.[181]

Perhaps the most critical difference between Indonesian Internet surfers and those in the developed world, however, is the type of information they obtain from the Net. *Warung* operators report that users are somewhat interested in cyber pornography, a huge Internet attraction in the West, but unlike the West, Indonesian Internet users are at least as interested in political information found on the Internet, especially that which is unavailable (or perceived to be unreliable) in traditional media.[182] *Apakabar*, an alternative, e-mail based source of political information and news published privately by John MacDougall in the United States, has gained legendary status as a vehicle of free expression of ideas within Indonesia.[183] Hill and Sen state that:

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[179] Ibid., 68-70.

[180] Ibid., 74. Hill and Sen quote these "unsourced" figures as widely accepted, noting that in their extensive research, no sourced figures were available.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Ibid., 75.

[183] Ibid., 75-76.

> *Apakabar has grown into one of the most significant sources of information for contemporary scholarship on Indonesia and is regarded by many activists in the NGO community as a valuable means of disseminating their materials and crucial source of uncensored domestic and international news.*[184]

Apakabar is frequently what is meant in Indonesia when the term "Internet" is used and interestingly the term "apakabar" is loosely translated as "what is news?" Ensuring anonymity of contributors, *apakabar* reports uncensored news within Indonesia within hours of its occurrence. For many dissident and opposition groups, *apakabar* is the lifeblood of their information retrieval and dissemination capabilities. The relative importance of *apakabar*, as well as the ability of the Internet to self-repair, was graphically displayed when the list shut down operations for a few weeks in the fall of 1996 due to financial difficulties. Other lists (albeit smaller) emerged to fill the void immediately.[185]

Other political information abounds on the Indonesian cyber landscape. *Tempo Interaktif* and *Suara Independen*, two dissident publications affiliated with the Alliance for Independent Journalists and banned in the print world, appear unobstructed on the Internet.[186] Additionally, banned organizations such as the People's Democratic Party (PRD),[187] or voiceless organizations such as the Surabaya Christian Communication Forum (FKKS) have found safe havens for operation on the Internet.[188] Jim Della-Giacoma reports that:

> *Increasing availability to the Internet in Indonesia is opening a new, uncensored avenue for the flow of information between activists, politicians, political prisoners, students, environmentalists and academics at home and abroad.*[189]

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[184] Ibid., 76.

[185] Ibid., 77.

[186] Ibid., 88.

[187] John Colmey, "Life on the Run With Indonesia's Democratic Outlaws," *Time International*, 26 May 1997; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 17 Oct. 1997.

[188] Hill and Sen, 85-87.

[189] Jim Della-Giacoma, "Politics, Not Sex, Indonesian Internet Concern," *Reuters*, 17 Nov. 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

2. Internet Effects on Autocracy

The Internet's direct effects upon Suharto's autocracy are quite clear; the indirect effects and causes of the Internet's arrival in Indonesia, however, are subtle and more difficult to observe. First, it is obvious that the regime not only allowed the spread of the Net through the licensing of ISPs, but that it invited the Internet's expansion as a means to facilitate high tech related economic growth. Second it is clear that the regime has found itself unable—or possibly unwilling—to control the Internet to the extent that it controls traditional media. Finally, signs are surfacing that the Suharto government has underestimated the powerful effect that the Internet would have in highlighting dissent within Indonesia, and now finds itself both involved in an internal power struggle over how to best deal with the problem, and at the same time slowly realizing that the forces that have been unleashed may be extremely difficult if not possible to stop.

The foregoing examples illustrate well that the Internet offers a new medium for the expression of opposition opinions and dissent. Strict government censorship in traditional media has been wholly abandoned on the Internet. Hill and Sen conclude that:

> *The speed of expansion of the Indonesian sections of the information superhighway, the amount of disorder of its traffic, seems to make policing it almost impossible. Seen thus, the Internet apparently breeches the censorship and restrictions of freedom of expression imposed by the New Order government.*[190]

Hill and Sen go on to suggest that the regime may view the Internet as unimportant, therefore explaining the current hands-off approach.[191] Another reason may be, as Hill and Sen clearly demonstrate elsewhere, that a serious rift is developing internal to the regime between the Department of Tourism, Post and Telecommunication (Deparpostel), a strong supporter of Internet expansion for economic reasons, and the Ministry of Information along with the military and internal security forces, a block that sees the potential dangers that the Internet poses to the carefully ordered and contained society in which they operate.[192] In any case, the forces supporting the economic benefits of unfettered Internet access have thus far

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[190] Hill and Sen, 88.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid., 78-84.

been very successful in maintaining the Internet free of government attempts to control, restrict or limit it.

Whatever the reasons for the current hands-off approach, even government authorities recognize that controlling the Net now would be virtually impossible short of shutting down the entire international phone system.[193] Kedzie's Dictator's Dilemma, then, is at work in Indonesia as well. Unlike Malaysia, however, the Suharto regime appears to have failed to predict the political liberalization that would necessarily occur with increased Internet access. The reasons for this failure are not clear.

3. Civil Society

It is worth noting that the evidence of the Internet's impact in Indonesia goes beyond simply subverting the regime's strong policies on censorship. The Internet is contributing to the rise and strengthening of civil society in Indonesia as well. The previously mentioned Internet *warung* phenomenon is an obvious example. The Internet's presence has resulted in the creation of new public spaces that are being utilized for deliberative discourse of issues that are taboo or not well represented in other forums. Empowerment of groups like the FKKS and the creation of linkages to the larger outside world is a primary example of the expanding "circle of influence" discussed in Chapter II between global NGOs and local groups.[194]

Finally, the potential exists for the Internet to assist in empowering Indonesia's rising middle class into political action. Hill and Sen conclude that:

> *It [the Internet] is, in 1990s Indonesia, a tool—and a toy—for the mostly male middle-class professionals. Almost every recent book on Indonesian politics refers to this professional middle class spawned by the New Order, but calling for change—for transparency, rule of law, and ultimately political democracy. In their hands, the free speech of the Internet may become a political tool to achieve some of the political liberalization to which they aspire.*[195]

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193 This view is voiced by Dewabrata, Information Director General for Radio, Television and Film in Yuli Ismartono, "Indonesia-Media: Banned Publications Make a Comeback on Internet," *Inter Press Service English News Wire*, 19 Mar. 1996; available from The Electronic Library [database on-line], http://www.elibrary.com; no file identifier; Internet; accessed 9 May 1997.

194 Hill and Sen, 87.

195 Ibid., 88-89.

Of course the Internet may act as a container for middle class dissent, preventing it from harming the regime. Hill and Sen further conclude that "political agency" or the will of the middle class and others to seek political change is more important to the future potential of such changes than technology itself.[196] Schwarz argues that at the present time the Indonesian middle class, although disgusted with the corruption so evident in Suharto's regime, has little propensity for confronting the regime as their commitment to political change is weak.[197] If such a push for political action does occur, however, then the Internet may provide an invaluable tool to those seeking to organize for change—as it is being used by dissidents and opposition groups today.

4. Implications for Democratization

Hill and Sen conclude that link between freedom of speech on the Net and democracy in Parliament or on the streets is tenuous.[198] Viewing the Internet in a vacuum, simply as a force unto itself, one cannot reach any other conclusion. Viewed in the context of the lessons of the third wave, however, and the common thread which underlies much of the research into the facilitating factors for transitions to democracy, a different perspective emerges. The likelihood that individuals will take the necessary actions to bring about democratic change is depedent upon a wide variety of factors, any number of which may or may not be present for the transition of a particular state. What the evidence has demonstrated is that the communication possibilities of the Internet, through a variety of mechanisms, is one such factor, and quite probably a strong one. In the case of Indonesia, clear indicators that the mechanisms that tie the Internet to the facilitation of democratization are present in Indonesia's current Internet experience. Nothing guarantees that democracy will ever come to Indonesia, nor is there any particularly convincing evidence that democratization is likely to occur in the near feature. The contention made in this thesis is that whatever the probability

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[196] Ibid., 89.

[197] Schwarz, 133.

[198] Hill and Sen, 84.

that Indonesia will undergo a democratic transition in the near future, the presence and expansion of the Internet in Indonesia and increased that probability.

V. PROSPECTS/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A. PROSPECTS

Predictions of future events are necessarily rooted in assumptions. One can always assume that current trends will continue, since a prediction of this sort is relatively easy to make. But such an analysis is shallow since it fails to recognize the fact that radical, unpredictable change does occur on a frequent basis. The arrival of the Information Age itself is a prime example of this phenomenon. Few people, if any, in the late 1950s, 1960s or possibly even the 1970s were willing or able to predict the incredible changes that the Information Age has brought. For this reason, any predictions of future events are biased by the assumptions under which they are made.

Rather than making predictions, then, it may be more useful to concentrate on assumptions that appear most promising. With this thought in mind I offer the following two insights that into the future of the Internet in Southeast Asia

1. Continued Internet Expansion

The driving forces that are compelling states to expand access to the global digital infrastructure (the Internet) show no signs of diminishing. States have every incentive to seek increasing levels of economic success for security and to improve the lives of their citizens. The Internet offers quick access to the knowledge base that has driven the developed world to high (and so far sustainable) standards of living. The Internet offers less developed countries the opportunity to quickly "catch-up" with the developing nations. It is in the economic interest of a number of firms in the developing states to continue to export the Internet to other states as well. Having based large portions of their economies on information production, provision and manipulation, information technologies are quickly becoming the primary commodity that the economies of developed states such as the United States have to offer the world.

2. Government Controls

The Internet is living in a state of near absolute anarchy. This cannot persist long, primarily because as trade and commerce expands on the Net, economic concerns will begin to demand more order and more certainty in the infosphere. Exactly what forms this new "orderliness" will take is certainly up to considerable question. A careful balance must be maintained to ensure that sufficient independent autonomy exists on the Net to conduct the business of information exchange, while ensuring that sufficient controls exist to lend a level of predictability to business transactions that occur. The only foreseeable method to achieve such a balance—on today's horizon at least—is the promise offered by globalization. Transgovernmental networks of information systems, governmental (judicial, executive and legislative) and business experts, as argued by Slaughter, provide the best hope for achieving such a balance. Change in the current (un)structure of the Internet will be necessary for the Information revolution to persist. Assuming a continuation of current trends in this realm does not seem reasonable.

B. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This thesis has strong implications for crafters of U.S. foreign policy. Promotion of democracy abroad is both a clearly stated goal of U.S. foreign policy and one that has in recent years received considerable attention and support from policy makers.[199] The strong likelihood that the Internet and global networking and communication technologies in general are a strong, statistically significant factor in the facilitation of democratization presents a wide range of new options for U.S. policy makers. Promotion of the Internet may indeed be an effective manner in which to promote democracy.

Such a democracy assistance program could take on a multitude of different forms, most of which would have no resemblance to any form of "democracy promotion" but would more likely be construed as technological or developmental assistance. A democracy assistance program designed solely to promote the expansion of and access to the Internet would yield several unique advantages:

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[199] Thomas Carothers, "Democracy," *Foreign Policy* (summer 1997): 11; and Paula R. Newberg and Thomas Carothers. "Aiding—and Defining—Democracy," *World Policy Journal* (spring 1996): 97.

(1) As the world leader in information technologies, such a program would serve the dual purpose of promoting democracy while boosting the sales in the information technology sectors of the U.S. economy.

(2) Current perceptual problems associated with U.S. democracy assistance programs (e.g. that specific political agendas are being advanced, or that local desires and concerns are not being effectively addressed, etc.) may be alleviated. It is likely that Internet promotion may be more likely to be viewed as a politically neutral and more palatable form of assistance.

(3) Such an assistance program would be much more clearly in the immediate economic interest of the receiving state. Therefore, the resources, attention and effort applied to the program by the receiving state would likely be greater than under traditional democracy assistance programs.

(4) Unlike traditional forms of democracy assistance, Internet promotion is more likely to be an acceptable program to a strong authoritarian state much earlier in the transition process—possibly even prior to authoritarian leaders believing that a democratic transition is even possible much less likely.

At a minimum, the issues raised in this thesis call for greater in-depth research into the potential causal relationship between Internet connectivity and democracy. Given the high level of attention that democracy studies have received in the existing literature, it is imperative that a more detailed examination of this phenomenon be conducted. On the policy making side more research is indicated as well.

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